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JUNK FOOD NATION

WHO'S TO BLAME FOR CHILDHOOD OBESITY?

by GARY RUSKIN and JULIET SCHOR

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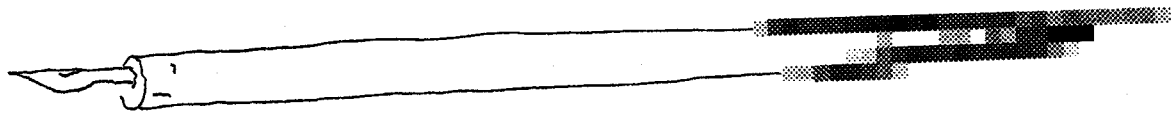

R.O. BLECHMAN

Tsuris Over Chutzpah

Cambridge, Mass.

■ Jon Wiener's screed ["Giving Chutzpah New Meaning," July 11] is based on a misrepresentation of my correspondence. I wrote to the directors of the University of California Press (with a copy and cover note to the governor) emphasizing that "I have no interest in censoring or suppressing [Norman] Finkelstein's freedom of expression." In a further letter, I made it clear that "I am not trying to get the Governor to prevent the publication of Finkelstein's book." The purpose of my letters was to encourage the UCP to give "serious consideration" to its decision to publish a defamatory lie (that I did not write *The Case for Israel*).

My letter was stimulated by an e-mail Finkelstein sent to the dean of Harvard Law School stating that he was "completing a manuscript for the University of California Press" that will "demonstrate that [Dershowitz] almost certainly didn't write the book, and perhaps didn't even read it prior to publication." Finkelstein has gone even further, asserting that I didn't write any of my books: "[Dershowitz] has come to the point where he's had so many people write so many of his books.... it's sort of like a Hallmark line for Nazis.... they churn them out so fast that he has now reached a point where he doesn't even read them." (This was after he compared me to Adolf Eichmann.)

Finkelstein knows that I wrote every word of the text of *The Case for Israel* by hand (I do not type, and I sent my handwritten manuscript to his publisher). He also knows that Harvard—after an investigation, which I sought—dismissed his absurd charges of plagiarism. Indeed, I was awarded a "dean's prize" for "exceptional scholarship" for a subsequent book. Neither the First Amendment nor academic freedom protects knowing falsehoods, as the Supreme Court said in *New York Times v. Sullivan* and as Finkelstein knows, since he threatened to sue the *Washington Post* in 2002 for calling him a "Holocaust revisionist."

The other purpose of my letter was to inform UCP what Professor Peter Novick, whose work stimulated Finkelstein's book on the Holocaust, had said about Finkelstein's reliability as a scholar: "As concerns particular assertions made by Finkelstein...the appropriate response is not (exhilarating) 'debate' but (tedious) examination of his footnotes. Such an examination reveals that many of those assertions are pure invention.[...] No facts alleged by Finkelstein should be assumed to be really facts, no quotation in his book should be assumed to be accurate, without taking the time to carefully compare his claims with the sources he cites."

Novick also concluded that the book, with its concoction of an international Jewish conspiracy, is a "twenty-first-century updating of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*" and a piece of "trash."

I questioned whether a university press should be lending its imprimatur to a sequel to what the *Times* also characterized as "a novel variation on the anti-Semitic forgery, 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion,' which warned of a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world."

I wrote the UCP that "Finkelstein will have no difficulty having his defamatory bigotry published by the kind of publisher who specializes in this kind of material and whose imprimatur will not be misused by Finkelstein." Imagine if a university press were contemplating the publication of a racist, homophobic or sexist book. Many of Finkelstein's supporters would be demanding that it be censored in the name of "speech codes" and "political correctness."

In my sequel to *The Case for Israel*, titled *The Case for Peace*—to be published in September—I demolish Finkelstein's claims, proving that he has made up quotes and facts. Finkelstein himself acknowledges that he has never been to Israel, knows "very little about Israel" and conducts no original research or interviews. It certainly shows in his work. I challenge *Nation* readers to read my book and then judge.

ALAN DERSHOWITZ

Cambridge, Mass.

■ It is one thing for Jon Wiener to launch a tendentious attack against Alan Dershowitz. Professor Dershowitz thoroughly deals with the Wiener-Finkelstein line of argumentation in his forthcoming book, *The Case for Peace.* It is another matter altogether for Wiener to insinuate—without any substantiation at all—that Professor Dershowitz's research assistants are guilty of academic dishonesty. We are deeply offended by Wiener's implications that we would not check the original sources cited in Professor Dershowitz's books. For as long as any of us can remember, the standard operating procedure in Professor Dershowitz's office has always been for us to check out or request the original sources from the Harvard libraries.

It was journalistically inappropriate for Wiener not to interview any of Professor Dershowitz's research assistants, who would have firsthand knowledge of what his instructions to "cite" a source actually mean.

HOLLY BETH BILLINGTON *(research assistant 2002–2004)*
ALEXANDER J. BLENKINSOPP *(2004–2005)*
ERIC CITRON *(2003–2004)*
C. WALLACE DEWITT *(2004–2005)*
AARON VOLOJ DESSAUER *(2004–2005)*
MITCH WEBBER *(2005)*

WIENER REPLIES

Irvine, Calif.

■ What Alan Dershowitz did had previously been unthinkable: ask a governor—in this case, Arnold Schwarzenegger—to intervene with a publisher's decision to publish a book—in this case, the University of California Press's decision to publish a book by Norman Finkelstein criticizing Dershowitz. The governor, to his credit, refused. His office replied to Dershowitz, "You have asked for the Governor's assistance in preventing the publication of this book," but "he is not inclined to otherwise exert influence in this case because of the clear, academic freedom issue it presents." Thus the star of *The Terminator* sought to teach a lesson about academic freedom to a Harvard law professor.

Dershowitz now quotes from what he says is a "further letter" to the governor explaining that he didn't really mean what he said in his original letter. When I interviewed him, I asked for a copy of this "further letter," but he refused to let me see one—which made me and my editors wonder whether it was real.

Dershowitz says he didn't want to prevent UC Press from publishing the book in question, but other letters show this isn't true. He had his lawyers send belligerent letters to dozens of people who might have power to block the book. For example, a letter from Dershowitz's attorney Rory Millson of Cravath, Swaine & Moore was sent to Lynne Withey, director of the UC Press, declaring that "the press's decision to publish this book" was "wholly illegitimate" and "part of a conspiracy to defame" Dershowitz. It concludes, "The only way to extricate yourself is immediately to terminate all professional contact with this full-time malicious defamer."

The UC Press decided to publish Finkelstein's book after a demanding review process. The manuscript was sent out for peer review by six leading scholars in the field; then publication was recommended by a committee of twenty UC faculty members. This manuscript was also reviewed by several libel attorneys. Dershowitz apparently hasn't seen the forth-

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EDITORIALS

Rhetoric & Withdrawal

The Administration's recent reversals of rhetoric, if not policy, were stunning—even though they were followed by efforts to make it sound as though the changes didn't mean what they clearly did mean. No more "global war on terror." (Instead, the ridiculously phrased "global struggle against violent extremism.") Withdraw some troops in the spring. (And to provide cover, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld telling Iraqis they had to patch together a Constitution right away, or else.) The struggle is "political," not military. (Most shocking: Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, saying he'd never liked the phrase "war on terror" because it meant people "in uniform" would have to fight it. And this from Douglas Feith, outgoing Under Secretary of Defense for Policy: "It's not a military project alone, and the United States cannot do it by itself alone.") So: no war on terror, no troops to fight one and an acceptance of the need for genuine international cooperation! Have White House and Pentagon officials secretly been reading *The Nation*?

Now, of course, the "war on terror" is back—says Bush, our lexicographer-in-chief—thus making things more confusing than ever. (This is the flip-flop of all time; indeed, it's a flip-flop-flip, now that the "war on terror" is on again. This is extreme disarray, to the point of farce.) But certainly such a broad rhetorical shift, accompanied by the explicit desire to draw down troops, means that a real change of policy is at least under discussion. Clearly the Administration wants to get into withdrawal mode, at least on the level of appearances, soon enough before the 2006 elections that it won't be seen as doing so for political reasons. The concern with appearances is well-founded: The latest AP poll shows support for the war at an all-time low of 38 percent, while Iraq veteran and Democratic war critic Paul Hackett nearly won a House seat in a solidly GOP district in Ohio.

If we *are* in withdrawal mode—as we were, let's remember, for four full years in Vietnam—then a new set of questions emerges, or at least a new version of the same old questions. But before getting to those, the antiwar movement needs to take note of its success in converting the American people to its view, this in turn leading to the changes—or beginnings of changes—within the Bush Administration. Democracy in action: The antiwar movement leads the way to a shift in public opinion that forces a change in policy. Now the antiwar forces must stay focused and organized, bringing in new allies from across the political spectrum.

As for the policy questions, they are what they always were. Will the US withdrawal be, in reality, a sham, accompanied by a doomed attempt to run Iraq from the shadows? And what will happen if it is real? (Possibly continuing turmoil, but at least that turmoil won't be exacerbated by continued occupation.) Is there anything the United States can do to give Iraq a better chance to achieve a peaceful and democratic society after withdrawal? (A few things, including fulfilling our obligation to pay for reconstruction and stepping aside to let the United Nations run nation-building and democratization efforts.)

What we do know is that despite the endless talk of "winning the war on terror" and "staying the course"—in early August Bush again trotted out the claim that "we are defeating the terrorists in a place like Iraq so we don't have to face them here at home"—the pace of killing continues unabated. By trying to remain in control of Iraq the United States will only further harm it. At the end of the day, genuine and full withdrawal, as we have always said, is the only answer.

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COMMENT

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Roberts and Roe

The debate over Judge John Roberts's nomination to the Supreme Court has alternated between speculation about whether he would vote to overrule *Roe v. Wade* and reassurances that he might not—or, at any rate, that his position on the case would not decide its fate. But for those concerned about women's lives rather than legal abstractions, the crucial issue is being overlooked: To place the lives and health of millions of women at risk, Roberts need not oppose *Roe v. Wade* itself; his interpretation of its protections need only be slightly more conservative than that of Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's.

To be sure, there is ample evidence that Roberts would follow the model of Chief Justice Rehnquist, for whom he clerked, and vote to overrule *Roe* outright. Roberts, after all, urged the Court to do precisely that when he served in the George H.W. Bush Administration. But focusing the debate exclusively on the survival of *Roe* itself allows Roberts to hide in the shadows of speculative questions—even though his patently clear conservatism is considerable cause for concern.

It's technically accurate, though hardly reassuring, that *Roe* could survive Roberts's opposition by a 5-to-4 majority. But while six sitting Justices do support *Roe*, only five—including O'Connor—have reliably voted to strike down severe restrictions on reproductive choice. The so-called "partial-birth abortion" ban—a misnamed law so recklessly written that it amounts to a widespread ban on a variety of abortion procedures—is an important case in point. The Court has struck down such bans in the past on the grounds that they didn't protect a woman's health, with O'Connor providing a critical vote for the five-Justice majority. The Supreme Court will soon be asked to review the constitutionality of a new federal "partial-birth abortion" ban that contains no meaningful health exception. Roberts, if confirmed, likely would cast the deciding vote.

Another case already pending before the Court deals with New Hampshire's law requiring that a parent be informed of a minor's decision to have an abortion, even if the abortion is needed to protect the minor's health. Roberts's vote in this case could create a wide-ranging precedent. Under *Roe* as initially decided, restrictions on pre-viability abortions had to be justified by a "compelling state interest." While on the Court, O'Connor was the architect of a new legal standard that left *Roe* and reproductive privacy nominally intact but significantly lowered their protections, permitting restrictions on abortion provided they did not constitute an "undue burden" on women. That murky standard, which leaves great discretion to lower-court judges, has allowed a broad array of state restrictions. Only a few—such as the "partial-birth abortion" bans—have been held to present an undue burden for a significant proportion of women. New Hampshire seeks to weaken even that fragile standard by permitting restrictions unless they would present an undue burden to women in every conceivable application. Such a precedent would eviscerate what is left of *Roe*. Women's circumstances—including their health—vary so substantially that such generalizations would be impossible. Practically speak-

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Fellow Nation Reader,

My name is **David Gill**, and I ran for Congress in 2004 because of the tragedies that I witness on a daily basis at my workplace. As an **Emergency Room physician** in rural Illinois, I see men, women, and children suffer the consequences of having a **health care system which primarily serves the needs of the pharmaceutical and health insurance industries.**

My 2004 campaign had many successes. Despite running in a "Red" district (IL-15) that had been written off by the so-called "experts," **I mounted a significant challenge** with only $100,000 and a novice, though passionate, **grassroots** campaign staff. By reaching out to people of all political persuasions and emphasizing the **Common Sense** nature of **UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE**, I overcame my initial lack of name recognition to receive the **third highest vote total** of the 19 Illinois Congressional challengers. With the experience gained from the 2004 campaign, we have an **excellent chance to pull off an upset** in 2006.

One problem remains, however: **fundraising**. Candidates such as myself, who favor **real change in our economic and health care systems**, are strongly opposed by the monied interests who created these systems. Consequently, it takes more than Democratic Party funding to combat the messages coming from the economic and political elite that dominate this system. **A progressive candidacy is, in reality, a kind of popular uprising, requiring broad-based support and funding** from the citizens who are fed up with the way the current system affects their lives.

Although I am running specifically for Illinois' 15th District seat, I am also running to bring a **progressive voice** back to the forefront of national debate. I am a longtime member of both **Physicians for a National Health Program** and **Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health**. I support Fair Trade, a sensible national security policy, protection of Social Security, and a return to ethics in government. If these issues represent the values which you hold near and dear, I would [illegible]ly appreciate **your** support in helping me reach my goal of raising $100,000 [illegible] of 2005.

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COMMENT

ing, the door to any restriction on a woman's right to choose would be unbarred.

Only O'Connor's vote has protected the undue-burden standard. Justice Anthony Kennedy, who shocked observers by voting to uphold *Roe*, has also held to a far narrower view of its protections—voting, for example, with Scalia, Thomas and Rehnquist to uphold the Nebraska "partial-birth abortion" ban. With one more ally, their bloc would become a majority. Whether Roberts is an inch to O'Connor's right or a mile, *Roe* could become functionally meaningless.

Based on the thousands of pages of records that paint Roberts as a clear legal architect of the Reagan and Bush strategies to limit civil rights, it seems quite plausible that he is as conservative as Scalia, Thomas and Rehnquist. But the fact that he crosses the critical threshold—being more conservative than O'Connor—is beyond doubt. Many observers note that there is no guarantee Roberts would be a conservative on the Court. To accept that reassurance, one must make the dubious assumption that the record he has compiled as both a practitioner and a judge is but a prelude to the complete reversal that awaits. The choice, then, is to believe Roberts has executed what must rank as one of history's greatest and longest-running political deceptions, or simply to take a man widely admired for his integrity at his word—namely, that he is a judicial conservative. That is neither an epithet nor an insult; it is simply an accurate description of his philosophy.

Senators must explore whether Roberts believes the requirements of *stare decisis* (respecting and adhering to precedent), about which he has spoken approvingly, are satisfied by upholding a right in name only if its core protections are gutted. Moreover, does Roberts believe the Court should decide cases of individual rights based on the number of individuals at stake and uphold laws on the theory they deprive "only" some, but not all, women of their health and liberty?

Senators have the right—and responsibility—to evaluate Roberts as President Bush did: on the basis of his judicial philosophy and legal views. But it is equally imperative that they frame the issues properly. If the debate about personal privacy and reproductive rights is limited to whether Roberts will vote to overturn *Roe*, it will raise a vital question but almost certainly fail, at least decisively, to answer it. But senators can easily ascertain whether Roberts stands to O'Connor's right, and that alone provides ample reason to worry. By all indications Roberts might vote to overrule *Roe*. To imperil the lives and rights of millions of women, he would not have to. Roberts need only vote like a shadow of the conservative he's always claimed to be. KATE MICHELMAN

Kate Michelman, president emeritus of NARAL Pro-Choice America, is the author of the forthcoming memoir With Liberty and Justice for All: A Life Spent Protecting the Right to Choose, *to be published by Hudson Street Press/Penguin in December.*

CALVIN TRILLIN

On President Bush's Recess Appointment Of John Bolton as Ambassador to the United Nations

The job's too vital, Bush has said,
To leave unfilled, and so instead
He'll simply stiff the Senate now,
And name John Bolton anyhow.
The problems of the world have grown,
And so we need some tantrums thrown.
Some analysts who haven't skewed
Intelligence remain unscrewed.
But that will change with Bolton there:
The man knows how to overbear.
We need someone to show contempt
For resolutions we'd pre-empt
And show contempt as well for those
Who might oppose what we propose—
Reflecting through contemptuous power
The last remaining superpower.
Those tiny nations need a pasting.
So let's get started. Time's a-wasting.

States of Disunion

The best that can be said about the split in organized labor, which occurred on July 25, opening day of the AFL-CIO's fiftieth-anniversary convention in Chicago, is that perhaps the principles of chaos theory will play out in interesting ways. By that theory, the slightest variation in conditions can drastically change the long-term behavior of a system. Or, as chaos pioneer Edward Lorenz put it, "One flap of a seagull's wings would be enough to alter the course of the weather forever."

The defection of first the Teamsters and Service Employees (SEIU) and a few days later the Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) is a bit more momentous than the flap of a bird's wings, costing the labor federation some 4 million members and $30 million in annual dues and establishing the basis for a rival federation, the Change to Win Coalition. But in every way beyond the material it is, so far, insubstantial. No political vibrancy or meaningful debate, no fundamental power shift or even analysis, no movement mojo, nothing revolutionary or even progressive is discernible in the schism. Except as props or fodder for rhetoric, workers have been left out. They may yet demand in, but how and by what mechanism no one can say.

In Chicago on the day of the split, each side fulfilled the other's caricature of it. At Navy Pier the convention came to order in a

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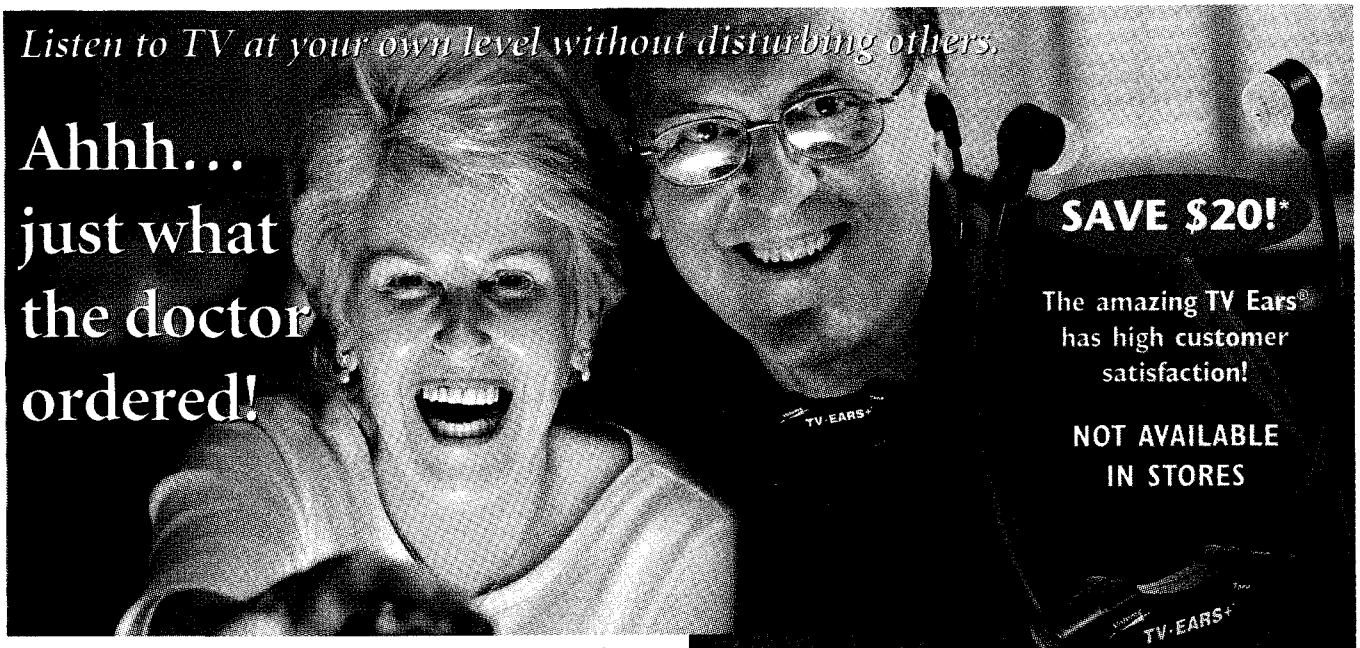

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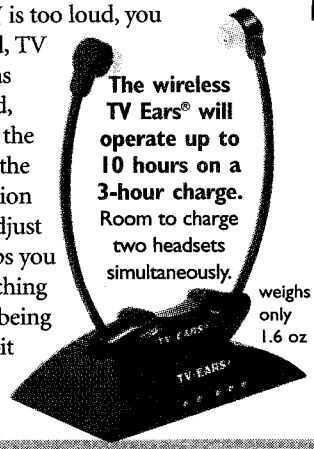

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vast, darkened hall, with prayer, color guard and solemn praise for "the greatest labor federation on earth." "Unity" was proclaimed from the dais, from the slogan on vest-backs of convention staff, from screen projections as if nothing were amiss; as if four major unions (the three that ultimately split and UNITE HERE) had not ceased paying dues some months before and were not now boycotting the convention, as if people in the hall were not seething and insulted, and crisis were not all around.

"This is surreal," a building trades activist kept repeating. In the visitors' section, international trade unionists were mystified. Business unfolded as usual. Politicians paraded on to extend their greetings and score their points, and silence or veiled reference addressed the issue foremost in everyone's mind.

In the bright, cramped offices of SEIU Local 1, where the Teamsters' James Hoffa kicked off the lunchtime press conference announcing the split, "Change to Win" was as contentless as "Unity" had been at Navy Pier. The day before, Joe Hansen of UFCW had told reporters that the coalition's differences with the AFL were "principled and fundamental" but couldn't explain them. Now Hoffa seemed to settle the matter by emphasizing the $10 million a year that the Teamsters would save by not paying into the federation. On organizing in core union sectors, one of the stated missions uniting the coalition partners, he mentioned trucking but referred more often to opportunities for the Teamsters to organize casino workers—gesturing fraternally toward UNITE HERE, which elsewhere is suing another union for encroaching on its claimed casino sector.

For his part, SEIU's Andy Stern seemed focused on history. The split, he said, was intended "not to divide the labor movement but to rebuild it." He said SEIU had no interest in raiding, the age-old practice of hitting on another union's members to get them to switch affiliations. Yet as he spoke, his operatives in California were in the midst of raiding an AFSCME local for 10,000 home-care workers under contract with Riverside County.

In the question period, Stern welcomed comparisons with the CIO, which emerged from a split within the American Federation of Labor in 1935, though unlike the current fissure, not before decades of mass rank-and-file industrial organizing. He spoke of bold, fundamental change, change that doesn't dilly-dally with consensus. Days later, in an interview with CNBC-TV, he sounded like a throwback to labor dinosaurs of the 1980s: "Well, our labor movement was built around an industrial economy back in the 1930s. It was sort of a class struggle kind of unionism, but workers in today's economy are not looking for unions to cause problems; they're looking for them to solve them, and this means just like Ireland where business and labor and government all began to work together, we need team America to really work together."

Team America? When a government-corporate combine is striking against union rights, civil rights, social rights, and in some parts the only sure job is in prison? Back at Navy Pier, the president of a Massachusetts electrical workers local said, "There's got to be something between pork chops and Kool-Aid," shorthand for, in the first case, bureaucrats who simply want to manage decline and who exist in every AFL and Change to Win union, and, in the second case, bureaucrats or their acolytes who have an inflated sense of their own superiority. That other "something" has yet to be named, but a move toward it is the only wing-flapping that might alter the course of labor's heavy weather for the good.

In the convention's aftermath there are at least interesting questions. Will anything emerge to fill the void left by two unsatisfactory forces, to develop a strategy helpful to union workers and the working class? Will local unionists, who had no real say in the split, find ways to exercise solidarity and coordinate political action? Will blacks, Latinos, women, gays, all the people who for years have been pressuring national unions and the AFL to go beyond window-dressing inclusion, be able to use the federation's just-passed diversity resolutions to shake up labor leadership, vision, decision-making? Will anything be made organizationally of the historic antiwar resolution? How will Change to Win function once it institutionalizes itself on September 27 and SEIU has to maintain operational unity and political cohesion with the conservative Carpenters, Teamsters and UFCW? Will other unions disaffiliate from the AFL? Will locals disaffiliate from the Change to Win unions? Will the AFL directly affiliate locals? Will Government Employees' president John Gage press on with a proposal for a serious top-to-bottom debate within the AFL on the nature of work, the economy and organizational strategies needed to meet them? Will anyone develop an independent, inside-outside people's political agenda, as Jesse Jackson passionately urged at the convention, or will disappointment with the Democrats and organizational disarray mean what it has so far among Change to Win and some AFL unions: money and support for Republicans?

Perhaps, as a North Carolina unionist wrote to me, "Pain is the only motivator for action," and we're in for exciting days. Just as likely, we're in for bloodletting and fragmentation. Either way, it's no time for romantics.

JoAnn Wypijewski

JoAnn Wypijewski is a writer based in New York City.

The Naked & the Undead

SPECTACLE

Every generation gets the movie monster it deserves. The Depression spawned Frankenstein and Dracula—a victim of modernity and a figment of predatory, shape-shifting capitalism. The nuclear age begat mammoth mutants; the chaotic 1970s produced super psycho-killers; the feminist era inspired hyper-macho creeps and the ultimate patriarchal cannibal, Hannibal Lecter. For reasons that have much to do with the rise of Fortress America, our current creature of choice is the invader from space.

In September this life form will land in prime time with two new series, *Invasion* and *Threshold*. It's already produced the summer's biggest blockbuster, Steven Spielberg's *War of the Worlds*, in which a cosmic Qaeda does its terror thing. But aliens haven't always been mean. Some are sweet—think *E.T.*—others progressive, like the visitor in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), whose only demand was world peace. Back in the cold war the evil invaders were mainly after mental enslavement, but in these even

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Forbes FYI

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less generous times their agenda is human extinction. And forget about liquid eyes and campy costumes; today's aliens are bony and buck naked, signifying their primal, transgressive power. That's been the model ever since *Independence Day* (1996), and Spielberg has applied the look and spirit of that film to the post-9/11 landscape.

This is the fourth dramatization of H.G. Wells's 1898 novel (if you count Orson Welles's infamous radio charade). None of them have preserved the author's intention to create a metaphor of subjugation that would resonate with the conduct of his own imperialist civilization. H.G. was a socialist; his adapters have no such impulse, least of all Spielberg. His *War of the Worlds* is stripped of liberal guilt. We are under attack almost from the opening credits, and by the time the New Jersey suburbs have been ravaged (Manhattan being off-limits for such fantasies these days), there's nothing to do but thrill to the awesome computer-generated imagery and root for your species. In a more relaxed time Spielberg gave us utopian pageants like *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977). But this hawkish moment demands spectacles of righteous revenge, and he has complied by making a very Republican horror film.

We are innocent, they are evil—that's the moral of this movie, and it plays like a Zell Miller speech. But there's a subversive way to spin the concept of a Hobbesian universe. It can stand for the state of nature in which all human society is based. That's the terrain of the summer's much more important chiller, George Romero's *Land of the Dead*. This zombie film comes far closer than Spielberg's pageant of conquest to capturing the deeply ironic perspective of Wells.

A Hollywood insider would know better than to freight a frightfest with critical theory, but Romero was an outsider artist before the word "indie" had cachet. His films are set in the Pittsburgh area, hardly an iconic locale. And he works in a B-movie genre that isn't supposed to harbor revelations. In his hands the dead not only walk; they signify.

A generation of movie buffs and mall rats has grown up with Romero's zombie tetralogy, which began in 1968 with the stark docudrama style and seditious ambiguity of *Night of the Living Dead*. In this pitch-black comedy, corpses rise inexplicably and with one goal in what's left of their minds: to devour the living. Instead of the usual wooden zombie affect, these creatures pursue their prey with an intense yearning that's almost a *Liebestod*. Because they move slowly it's fairly easy to kill them—permanently—by bashing their brains. Good old boys take to this task with relish, but when they mistake the hero for a zombie something unanticipated happens. Because Romero has cast a black man in this role, he can play with the iconography of race. The film's climactic moment is a grainy freeze-frame of the hero's body being dragged away by the "saviors" of civilization. It's impossible not to think of a lynching.

In most horror movies, society prevails by outsmarting the uncanny. In Romero's work it's the zombies who learn. By *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) they've evolved enough to have a vague sense of their former lives. They converge on an abandoned shopping center, stumbling among the commodities while the remnant living try to gun and club them down. These scenes of a bloodbath in the temple of consumption evoke both the slaughterhouse and the numb hysteria of an after-Christmas sale. The zombies aren't us, but they aren't exactly unlike us, and that congruence will strengthen as the saga unfolds.

In this year's installment the undead are legion, and with live game growing scarce they close in on a luxury highrise that's become a fortress for the rich. The kingfish of this citadel, a dictator-realtor, is poised against the zombie leader, a caring corpse painfully aware of the slaughter of his people, who want nothing more, after all, than to eat. Here is Wells's metaphor filtered through an almost Brechtian lens. *Land of the Dead* casts an image of America as a ravening wasteland where them that has gets—until they get consumed.

This is not just a political metaphor. It evokes the final victory of mute organic matter over "sentient" human beings, a truly terrifying idea—and not one Spielberg would dare to entertain. In his films the center always holds. But in Romero's poetics of horror, things fall apart, mere anarchy is loosed and a rough beast slouches toward Pittsburgh to be born. RICHARD GOLDSTEIN

Richard Goldstein writes about the connections among pop culture, politics and sexuality.

In Fact . . .

VOICES UNSILENCED

■ In July Voices in the Wilderness, an organization of American peace insurgents formed in 1996 to deliver medicines to the Iraqi people in defiance of a US/UN embargo, faced the reckoning in a federal district court. Since 1996 some seventy Voices delegations have traveled to Iraq to protest US rules barring the export of medicines. The US Treasury's Office of Foreign Asset Control finally cracked down and sued the group to collect a $20,000 fine it imposed in 2002. Voices' lawyers asked in court why it took so long to levy this penalty, which covered actions taken in 1998. Was the fine, levied days after Voices supporters participated from Baghdad in a worldwide protest against the impending war, political retaliation? Voices' lawyers also accused the OFAC of selective enforcement because it had done nothing about US oil companies' violation of the sanctions regime. Kathy Kelly, co-coordinator of VITW, told us: "We're 102 percent certain the judge will rule against us, and expect the ruling anytime between now and six months from now." She said the group will continue to refuse to pay the fine, a civil penalty (see www.vitw.org).

THIS WEEK ON THE WEB

■ Frances Cerra Whittelsey says the Valerie Plame affair should be an occasion for soul-searching about how the media covers the President. Dave Zirin argues that sports can be an arena where the ideas of our society are not only presented but also challenged. Natasha Degen interviews Arthur Danto on how *The Nation* changed his life. Richard Lingeman imagines Faulkner on *Oprah*. And Katrina vanden Heuvel reflects on the new "Network of Spiritual Progressives."

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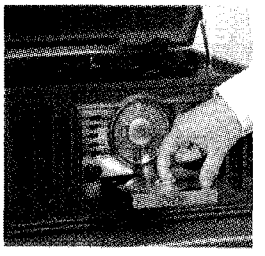

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

The 'Stricken' President: When Down Is Up

If you accept the judgment of the polls, George Bush is a stricken President. Leave aside his now permanent sub–50 percent status in popular approval. Take his calling card, conduct of the "war on terror" and Iraq. His status on the approval charts now shows him wallowing without mast or rudder in the mid-30s. Honesty? Here Bush is bidding to join Nixon in the sub-basement of popular esteem, somewhere around the 40 percent mark.

But hold! The measure of a stricken President is surely an inability to push through the legislation he desires. Remember Bill Clinton. By midsummer in his maiden year of White House occupancy he was truly stricken. He had to send a Mayday call for lifeboats, which duly arrived under the captaincy of Republican David Gergen, with Dickie Morris soon to follow. By July 1993, as the receptacle of liberal hopes, the Clinton presidency was over.

Look now at Bush. Stricken he may be in the popular polls, but his political agenda flourishes.

Start with his nomination of John Roberts to the US Supreme Court. As the career of this far-right jurist gets dissected, there's surely rich meat for critics to feast on and even throw the nomination into doubt. It turns out that Roberts's judicial philosophy is as extreme in its right-wing tilt as that of Robert Bork, although Roberts wears the mien of a cornfed Midwesterner and not the feral snarl that doomed Bork from the outset. The record shows that throughout his career Roberts has been a prime legal strategist for the subversion of constitutional rights and unbridled expansion of executive power.

But does Roberts face a gantlet of ferocious interrogatories from Democratic senators? Hardly. The Democratic challenge to Roberts, such as it is, has mostly devolved into a pillow fight with the White House over the availability of records, the kind of procedural wrangle that drags on to the delight of political insiders, but to no useful consequence.

There's no need for more materials. The necessary details are already there in full view, from Roberts's legal assaults on the environment and on civil rights to his stance on corporate impunity and on the denial of fundamental human rights in the prosecution of Bush's wars. Why the search for more records?

The Democrats have long since lost the appetite to confront a nominee at the level of political philosophy, the terrain on which they defeated Bork in 1987, when Jesse Jackson was challenging the party's credentials from the left. When it came to Clarence Thomas they opted for a probe of his sex life, and Thomas turned the tables on them.

You can't expect the Democrats to toast Roberts on the grill for his ruling upholding denial of any rights to "enemy combatants" when the Democrats themselves shunned torture at Abu Ghraib as an issue in the spring and summer of 2004.

Go now from Roberts to John Bolton and yes, we find another summer triumph for the stricken President. It seemed for a while that Bolton's nomination was on its knees. The Democrats could have floored him on a number of issues, starting with his lies to Congress about the fact that he had been questioned by the State Department's Inspector General in 2003 in the Plame inquiry. But the Democrats let him struggle on, losing the initiative in another wrangle about records, and now, with the recess appointment, Bolton is installed as US ambassador to the United Nations till January 2007.

Let's move from nominees to legislation. In the past couple of weeks, as Bush has drawn howls of ridicule for his five-week vacation to Crawford, Texas, his energy bill sailed through Congress and he put CAFTA, which had seemed dead, over the top. Capping these triumphs, Bush spun on a dime, deep-sixing his declared intent to veto the Highway Bill and signing the $286.4 billion gift to the cement lobby and endangered Republican politicians.

The Democrats can win when they truly have to, as a matter of political survival. At least half of them would probably like to have seen Social Security handed over to the mutual fund industry. But the Democrats know that if they throw Social Security over the side, they would be sawing through one of the two last remaining planks of their party's substantive platform, Choice being the other. So they made a stand on Social Security, and won.

Opposition to free trade is not part of the Democratic Party's substantive political platform. No matter how close each fight over free trade has been since the NAFTA battles of the late 1980s and early '90s, no matter how tense the cliffhanger, there have always been the Democratic votes necessary to win passage of those trade-pact laws.

It was the same this time. In the wake of the 217–215 CAFTA vote in the House, Democratic minority leader Nancy Pelosi gave a press conference, charging the Republicans and the White House with arm-twisting, bribery and dirty tricks. To which the obvious answer was: Big deal. Remember Clinton's tactics in the NAFTA and WTO fights? But where was the arm-twisting to keep those fifteen pro-CAFTA Democrats in line?

The war in Iraq? It's not popular and there is vocal and conspicuous opposition among the people, but not in Congress. Cindy Sheehan, mother of a soldier killed in Iraq, draws national attention as she demonstrates outside the gates of Fort Bush in Crawford. Where are the Democratic politicians who should be standing beside her? Hillary Clinton has co-sponsored a bill calling for an increase in troop strength by 80,000.

Confrontation on issues of principle are not doomed in the twenty-first century. The California nurses have shown that, as they send Schwarzenegger into the political twilight. But the Democrats have almost entirely shunned battles of principle. What lies ahead? In 2006 the Democrats will be campaigning on a Stay the Course strategy in Iraq while the stricken President will be opting for a de facto cut-and-run policy as urged by Senator Chuck Hagel of Nebraska. Hagel and Ron Paul as the peace ticket in 2008! Who needs Democrats? ■

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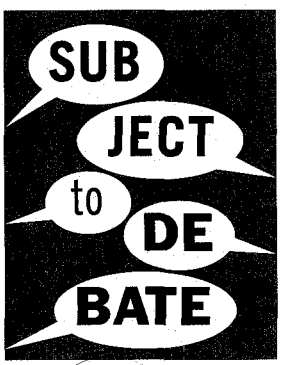
KATHA POLLITT

Feminists for (Fetal) Life



Can you be a feminist and be against abortion? Feminists for Life claims to be both, and if you listen long enough to its voluble and likable president, Serrin Foster, you might almost think it's true. FFL is on a major publicity roll these days, because Jane Roberts, wife of Supreme Court nominee John Roberts, is a pro bono legal adviser, former officer and significant donor (she gave between $1,000 and $2,499 in 2003). When I caught up with Foster at the end of a long day that included an hour on NPR's *On Point*, she talked a blue and quite amusing streak, and although it can be hard to follow an aria that swoops from Susan B. Anthony to telecommuting to water pollution, while never quite answering the actual question, I'm sure she means every word of it. How can you argue with FFL's contention that America does not give pregnant women and mothers the support they need? Feminists, the prochoice kind, have been saying this for years. So far as I can tell, FFL is the only "prolife" organization that talks about women's rights to work and education and the need to make both more compatible with motherhood. It has helped bring housing for mothers and children to Georgetown University and supports the Violence Against Women Act; Foster reminded me that she and I had been on the same side in the mid-1990s in opposing family caps, the denial of additional benefits to women who had more children while on welfare. Why, she wondered, couldn't we all just work together to "help pregnant women"?

The problem is that FFL doesn't just oppose abortion. FFL wants abortion to be *illegal*. All abortions, period, including those for rape, incest, health, major fetal defects and, although Foster resisted admitting this, even some abortions most doctors would say were necessary to save the woman's life. (Although FFL is not a Catholic organization, its rejection of therapeutic abortion follows Catholic doctrine.) FFL wants doctors who perform abortions to be punished, possibly with prison terms.

It was extremely difficult to get Foster to say what she thought would happen if abortion was banned. At one point she would not concede that women would continue to have abortions if it was recriminalized; at another she argued that criminalization was no big deal: Instructions on self-abortion were posted on the Internet. I had to work to get her to admit that illegal abortion was common before *Roe*, and that it was dangerous—numbers on abortion deaths were concocted by pre-*Roe* legalization advocates, she told me. Yet the FFL website prominently features gory stories of abortion mishaps and discredited claims that abortion causes breast cancer. (Challenged on the cancer connection, Foster says they just want women to have medical information. Asked why they don't then link to the 2004 *Lancet* article debunking their cancer claims, she says they are not medical experts and have considered taking the cancer pages down.) So legal abortion is dangerous but illegal abortion would be safe? When I pointed out that in countries where the operation is banned, such as Brazil and Peru, rates are sky-high and abortion a major cause of injury and death, she professed ignorance.

I got similarly evasive answers when I asked why FFL didn't promote birth control, and when I asked if FFL considered the pill an "abortifacient." She did tell me that "birth control doesn't work" for swing-shift nurses because they lose track of their body clock—interesting, if true—or for teenagers, which I know to be false. "We just want to focus on meeting the everyday needs of women," she told me. But when I asked how the everyday needs of women with unwanted pregnancies would be served by encouraging them to bear children and place them for adoption, Foster didn't answer. Instead, she extolled the benefits of open adoption.

In the FFL view, women have abortions because they are victims—of shamed parents, abusive boyfriends, prochoice propaganda and a society hostile to motherhood. Only a "few percent" of women who have abortions have what they need to choose childbirth instead—the rest are like prostitutes, Foster told me, coerced women falsely said to be making a free choice. The FFL vision is that women should embrace motherhood whenever a wayward sperm meets an egg, and that this is what women really want to do, and would do if given support. When I pointed out that Scandinavia provides a raft of benefits for mothers and children, yet many women there still seek abortions for about a million reasons, Foster conceded the point and moved right along.

It is indeed feminist to say no woman should have to abort a wanted child to stay in school or have a career—FFL's line is thus an advance on the more typical antichoice position, which is that women have abortions to go to Europe or fit into their prom dress. You can see why their upbeat, rebellious slogans—"refuse to choose," "question abortion," "women deserve better"—appeal to students. (But what do those students think when they find that the postabortion resources links are all to Christian groups and that FFL's sunny pregnancy-assistance advice includes going on food stamps or welfare?) Exposing the constraints on women's choices, however, is only one side of feminism. The other is acknowledging women as moral agents, trusting women to decide what is best for themselves. For FFL there's only one right decision: Have that baby. And since women's moral judgment cannot be trusted, abortion must be outlawed, whatever the consequences for women's lives and health—for rape victims and 12-year-olds and 50-year-olds, women carrying Tay-Sachs fetuses and women at risk of heart attack or stroke, women who have all the children they can handle and women who don't want children at all. FFL argues that abortion harms women—that's why it clings to the outdated cancer claims. But it would oppose abortion just as strongly if it prevented breast cancer, filled every woman's heart with joy, lowered the national deficit and found Jimmy Hoffa. That's because they aren't really feminists—a feminist could not force another woman to bear a child, any more than she could turn a pregnant teenager out into a snowstorm. They are fetalists. ■

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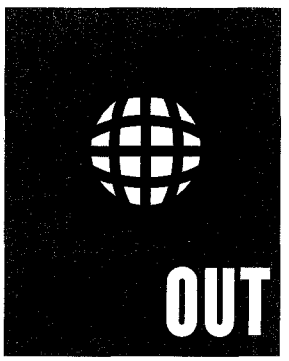
NAOMI KLEIN

Terror's Greatest Recruitment Tool



Hussain Osman, one of the men alleged to have participated in London's failed bombings on July 21, recently told Italian investigators that they prepared for the attacks by watching "films on the war in Iraq," *La Repubblica* reported. "Especially those where women and children were being killed and exterminated by British and American soldiers...of widows, mothers and daughters that cry."

It has become an article of faith that Britain was vulnerable to terror because of its politically correct antiracism. Yet Osman's comments suggest that what propelled at least some of the bombers was rage at what they saw as extreme racism. And what else can we call the belief—so prevalent we barely notice it—that American and European lives are worth more than the lives of Arabs and Muslims, so much more that their deaths in Iraq are not even counted?

It's not the first time that this kind of raw inequality has bred extremism. Sayyid Qutb, the Egyptian writer generally viewed as the intellectual architect of radical political Islam, had his ideological epiphany while studying in the United States. The puritanical scholar was shocked by Colorado's licentious women, it's true, but more significant was Qutb's encounter with what he later described as America's "evil and fanatic racial discrimination." By coincidence, Qutb arrived in the United States in 1948, the year of the creation of the State of Israel. He witnessed an America blind to the thousands of Palestinians being made permanent refugees by the Zionist project. For Qutb, it wasn't politics, it was an assault on his identity: Clearly Americans believed that Arab lives were worth far less than those of European Jews. According to Yvonne Haddad, a professor of history at Georgetown University, this experience "left Qutb with a bitterness he was never able to shake."

When Qutb returned to Egypt he joined the Muslim Brotherhood, leading to his next life-changing event: He was arrested, severely tortured and convicted of antigovernment conspiracy in an absurd show trial. Qutb's political theory was profoundly shaped by torture. Not only did he regard his torturers as subhuman, he stretched that categorization to include the entire state that ordered this brutality, including the practicing Muslims who passively lent their support to Nasser's regime.

Qutb's vast category of subhumans allowed his disciples to justify the killing of "infidels"—now practically everyone—in the name of Islam. A movement for an Islamic state was transformed into a violent ideology that would lay the intellectual groundwork for Al Qaeda. In other words, so-called Islamist terrorism was "home grown" in the West long before the July 7 attacks—from its inception it was the quintessentially modern progeny of Colorado's casual racism and Cairo's concentration camps.

Why is it worth digging up this history now? Because the twin sparks that ignited Qutb's world-changing rage are currently being doused with gasoline: Arabs and Muslims are being debased in torture chambers around the world and their deaths are being discounted in simultaneous colonial wars, at the same time that graphic digital evidence of these losses and humiliations is available to anyone with a computer. And once again, this lethal cocktail of racism and torture is burning through the veins of angry young men. As Qutb's past and Osman's present reveal, it's not our tolerance for multiculturalism that fuels terrorism; it's our tolerance for the barbarism committed in our name.

Into this explosive environment has stepped Tony Blair, determined to sell two of the main causes of terror as its cure. He intends to deport more Muslims to countries where they will likely face torture. And he will keep fighting wars in which soldiers don't know the names of the towns they are leveling. (According to an August 5 Knight Ridder report, a Marine sergeant in Iraq recently pumped up his squad by telling them that "these will be the good old days, when you brought...death and destruction to—what the fuck is this place called?" Someone piped in helpfully, "Haqlaniyah.")

Meanwhile, in Britain, there is no shortage of the "evil and fanatic racial discrimination" that Qutb denounced. "Of course too there have been isolated and unacceptable acts of a racial or religious hatred," Blair said before unveiling his terror-fighting plan. "But they have been isolated." Isolated? The Islamic Human Rights Commission received 320 complaints of racist attacks in the wake of the bombings; the Monitoring Group has received eighty-three emergency calls; Scotland Yard says hate crimes are up 600 percent from this time last year. Not that pre–July 7 was anything to brag about: "One in five of Britain's ethnic minority voters say that they considered leaving Britain because of racial intolerance," according to a *Guardian* poll in March.

This last statistic shows that the brand of multiculturalism practiced in Britain (and France, Germany, Canada...) has little to do with genuine equality. It is instead a Faustian bargain, struck between vote-seeking politicians and self-appointed community leaders, one that keeps ethnic minorities tucked away in state-funded peripheral ghettos while the centers of public life remain largely unaffected by the seismic shifts in the national ethnic makeup. Nothing exposes the shallowness of this alleged tolerance more than the speed with which Muslim communities are now being told to "get out" (to quote Tory MP Gerald Howarth) in the name of core national values.

The real problem is not too much multiculturalism but too little. If the diversity now ghettoized on the margins of Western societies—geographically and psychologically—were truly allowed to migrate to the centers, it might infuse public life in the West with a powerful new humanism. If we had deeply multiethnic societies, rather than shallow multicultural ones, it would be much more difficult for politicians to sign deportation orders sending Algerian asylum-seekers to torture, or to wage wars in which only the invaders' dead are counted. A society that truly lived its values of equality and human rights, at home and abroad, would have another benefit too. It would rob terrorists of what has always been their greatest recruitment tool: our racism. ■

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ARTICLES

JUNK FOOD NATION

WHO'S TO BLAME FOR CHILDHOOD OBESITY?

by GARY RUSKIN and JULIET SCHOR

In recent months the major food companies have been trying hard to convince Americans that they feel the pain of our expanding waistlines, especially when it comes to kids. Kraft announced it would no longer market Oreos to younger children, McDonald's promoted itself as a salad producer and Coca-Cola said it won't advertise to kids under 12. But behind the scenes it's hardball as usual, with the junk food giants pushing the Bush Administration to defend their interests. The recent conflict over what America eats, and the way the government promotes food, is a disturbing example of how in Bush's America corporate interests trump public health, public opinion and plain old common sense.

The latest salvo in the war on added sugar and fat came July 14–15, when the Federal Trade Commission held hearings on childhood obesity and food marketing. Despite the fanfare, industry had no cause for concern; FTC chair Deborah Majoras had declared beforehand that the commission will do absolutely nothing to stop the rising flood of junk food advertising to children. In June the Department of Agriculture denied a request from our group Commercial Alert to enforce existing rules forbidding mealtime sales in school cafeterias of "foods of minimal nutritional value"—i.e., junk foods and soda pop. The department admitted that it didn't know whether schools are complying with the rules, but, frankly, it doesn't give a damn. "At this time, we do not intend to undertake the activities or measures recommended in your petition," wrote Stanley Garnett, head of the USDA's Child Nutrition Division.

Conflict about junk food has intensified since late 2001, when a Surgeon General's report called obesity an "epidemic." Since that time the White House has repeatedly weighed in on the side of Big Food. It worked hard to weaken the World Health Organization's global anti-obesity strategy and went so far as to question the scientific basis for "the linking of fruit and vegetable consumption to decreased risk of obesity and diabetes." Former Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson—then our nation's top public-health officer—even told members of the Grocery Manufacturers Association to "'go on the offensive' against critics blaming the food industry for obesity," according to a November 12, 2002, GMA news release.

Last year, during the reauthorization of the children's nutrition programs, Republican Senator Peter Fitzgerald of Illinois attempted to insulate the government's nutrition guidelines from the intense industry pressure that has warped the process to date. He proposed a modest amendment to move the guidelines from the USDA to the comparatively more independent Institute of Medicine. The food industry, alarmed about the switch, secured a number of meetings at the White House to get it to exert pressure on Fitzgerald. One irony of this fight was that the key industry lobbying came from the American Dietetic Association, described by one Congressional staffer as a "front

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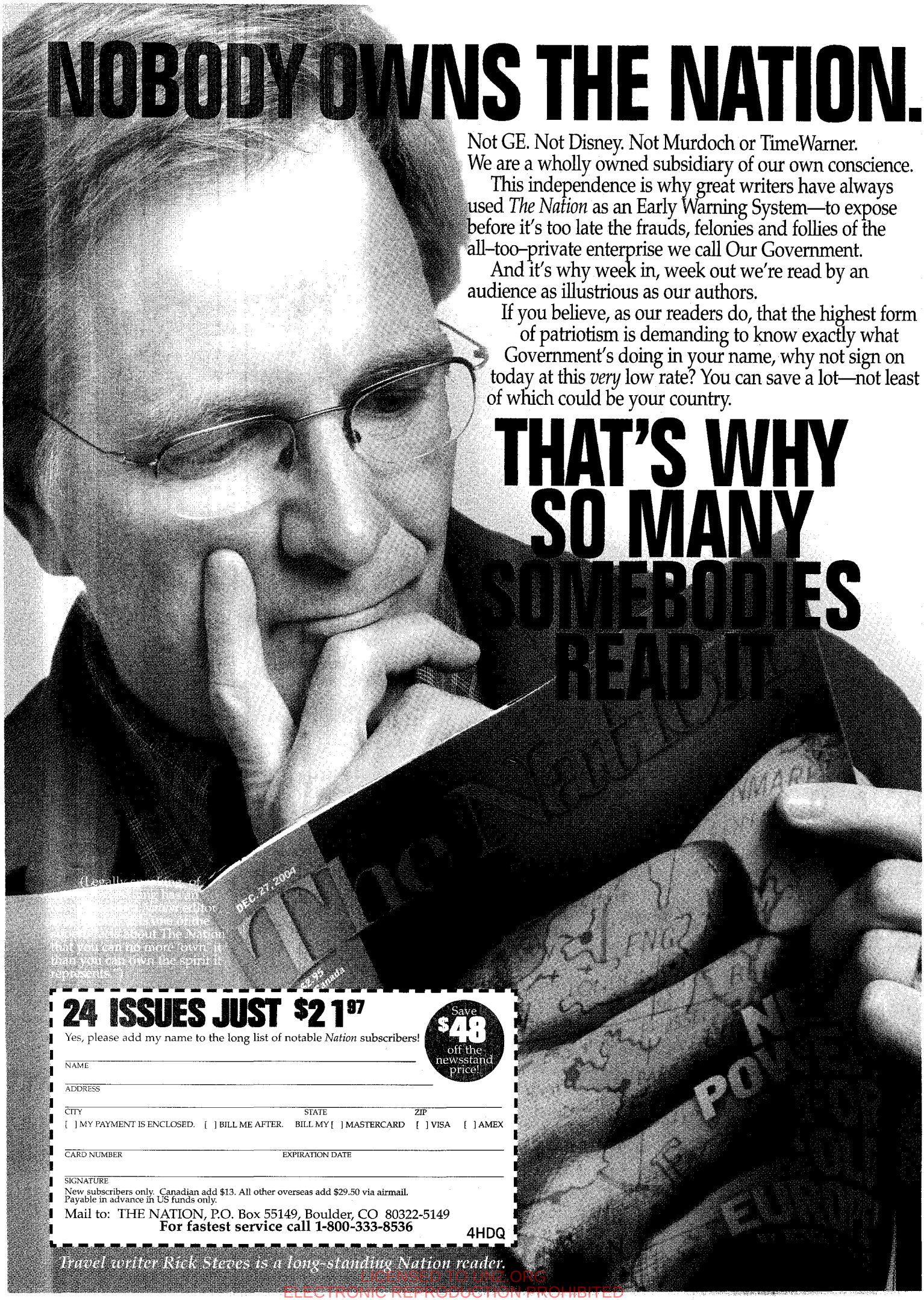

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for the food groups." Fitzgerald held firm but didn't succeed in enacting his amendment before he left Congress last year.

By that time the industry's lobbying effort had borne fruit, or perhaps more accurately, unhealthy alternatives to fruit. The new federal guidelines no longer contain a recommendation for sugar intake, although they do tell people to eat foods with few added sugars. The redesigned icon for the guidelines, created by a company that does extensive work for the junk food industry, shows no food, only a person climbing stairs.

Growing industry influence is also apparent at the President's Council on Physical Fitness. What companies has the government invited to be partners with the council's Challenge program? Coca-Cola, Burger King, General Mills, Pepsico and other blue chip members of the "obesity lobby." In January the council's chair, former NFL star Lynn Swann, took money to appear at a public relations event for the National Automatic Merchandising Association, a vending machine trade group activists have been battling on in-school sales of junk food.

Big Food's strategy is to deny that the problem (obesity) is caused by the product (junk food). Instead, lack of exercise is the culprit.

Not a lot of subtlety is required to understand what's driving Administration policy. It's large infusions of cash. In 2004 "Rangers," who bundled at least $200,000 each to the Bush/Cheney campaign, included Barclay Resler, vice president for government and public affairs at Coca-Cola; Robert Leebern Jr., president of federal affairs at Troutman Sanders PAG, lobbyist for Coca-Cola; Richard Hohlt of Hohlt & Co., lobbyist for Altria, which owns about 85 percent of Kraft foods; and José "Pepe" Fanjul, president, vice chairman and COO of Florida Crystals Corp., one of the nation's major sugar producers. Hundred-thousand-dollar men include Kirk Blalock and Marc Lampkin, both Coke lobbyists, and Joe Weller, chairman and CEO of Nestle USA. Altria also gave $250,000 to Bush's inauguration this year, and Coke and Pepsi gave $100,000 each. These gifts are in addition to substantial sums given during the 2000 campaign.

For their money, the industry has been able to buy into a strategy on obesity and food marketing that mirrors the approach taken by Big Tobacco. That's hardly a surprise, given that some of the same companies and personnel are involved: Junk food giants Kraft and Nabisco are both majority-owned by tobacco producer Philip Morris, now renamed Altria. Similarity number one is the denial that the problem (obesity) is caused by the product (junk food). Instead, lack of exercise is fingered as the culprit, which is why McDonald's, Pepsi, Coke and others have been handing out pedometers, funding fitness centers and prodding kids to move around. When the childhood obesity issue first burst on the scene, HHS and the Centers for Disease Control funded a bizarre ad campaign called Verb, whose ostensible purpose was to get kids moving. This strategy has been evident in the halls of Congress as well. During child nutrition reauthorization hearings, the man some have called the Senator from Coca-Cola, Georgia's Zell Miller, parroted industry talking points when he claimed that children are "obese not because of what they eat at lunchrooms in schools but because, frankly, they sit around on their duffs watching Eminem on MTV and playing video games." And that, of course, is the fault not of food marketers but of parents. Miller's office shut down a Senate Agriculture Committee staff discussion of a ban on soda pop in high schools by refreshing their memories that Coke is based in Georgia.

A related ploy is to deny the nutritional status of individual food groups, claiming that there are no "good" or "bad" foods, and that all that matters is balance. So, for example, when the Administration attacked the WHO's global anti-obesity initiative, it criticized what it called the "unsubstantiated focus on 'good' and 'bad' foods." Of course, if fruits and vegetables aren't healthy, then Coke and chips aren't unhealthy. While such a strategy is so preposterous as to be laughable, it is already having real effects. Less than a month after Cadbury Schweppes, the candy and soda company, gave a multimillion-dollar grant to the American Diabetes Association, the association's chief medical and scientific officer claimed that sugar has nothing to do with diabetes, or with weight. Industry has also bankrolled front groups like the Center for Consumer Freedom, an increasingly influential Washington outfit that demonizes public-health advocates as the "food police" and promotes the industry point of view.

Meanwhile, public opinion is solidly behind more restrictions on junk food marketing aimed at children, especially in schools. A February *Wall Street Journal* poll found that 83 percent of American adults believe "public schools need to do a better job of limiting children's access to unhealthy foods like snack foods, sugary soft drinks and fast food." Two bills recently introduced in Congress, Massachusetts Senator Ted Kennedy's Prevention of Childhood Obesity Act and Iowa Senator Tom Harkin's Healthy Lifestyles and Prevention (HeLP) America Act, both place significant restrictions on the ability of junk food producers to market in schools.

Interestingly, this is a crossover issue between red and blue states. Concern about obesity and excessive junk food marketing to kids is shared by people across the political spectrum, and some conservatives, such as Texas Agriculture Commissioner Susan Combs and the Eagle Forum's Phyllis Schlafly, as well as California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, have argued for restricting junk food marketing to children. This may be one of the reasons New York Senator Hillary Clinton has once again become vocal on the topic of marketing to children, although Senator Clinton has called not for government intervention but merely for industry self-regulation, requesting that the companies "be more responsible about the effect they are having"—exactly the policy the industry wants.

A vigorous government response would clearly garner the sympathy of the majority of Americans. The growing chasm between what the public wants and the Administration's protection of the profits of Big Food is a powerful example of the decline of democracy in this country. Let them eat chips! ■

Gary Ruskin is executive director of Commercial Alert. Juliet Schor, a professor of sociology at Boston College, is the author of Born to Buy: The Commercialized Child and the New Consumer Culture. *She is a member of Commercial Alert's board of directors.*

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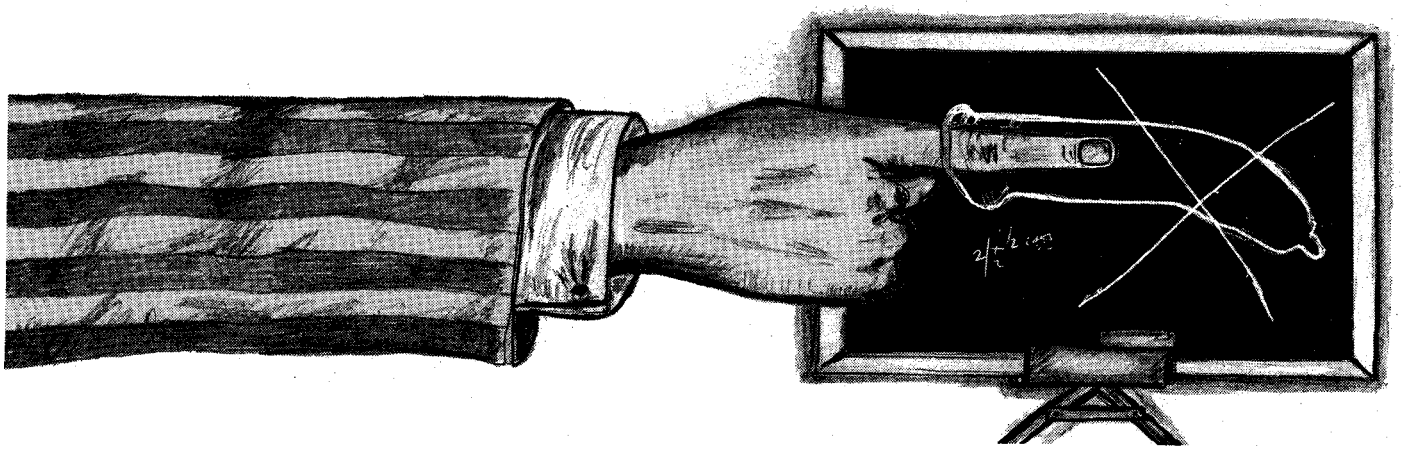
USING MONEY FROM WASHINGTON, A PROGRAM IN LOUISIANA THAT WAS FOUNDED TO DISCOURAGE TEENS FROM HAVING SEX ENCOURAGES THEM TO ENGAGE IN POLITICS.



KAREN CALDICOTT

Louisiana Purchase: The Feds Recruit Culture War Cadets

SHARON LERNER

Standing at the entrance to Louisiana's state capitol building on a sunny morning in April, Dee Burbank paraphrased Jesus. "It's been said that if we know the truth, the truth will set us free," Burbank declared, pausing for effect as more than 1,000 teenagers gathered on the stone steps below her fell into a round of whooping. "But I add to that, if you follow a lie, the lie of the sexual revolution—if you follow a lie, you may die."

A small woman with glasses perched professorially on her nose, Burbank railed against sex outside of marriage in a cadence that brought skilled politicians and pastors to mind. "It's a privilege to be here with our greatest treasure, our young people—and our legislative officials, our other governmental officials, to celebrate the truth that will set us free!" she boomed. As Burbank reached a crescendo—shouting that "Ignorance, stupidity can only reign so long because the truth will emerge like the phoenix and rise and light the skies!"—one blond, ponytailed girl in the audience leaned over and marveled to her friend, "Wow, she could be a preacher!"

Dee Burbank is neither politician nor preacher. She is a doctor on the payroll of Louisiana's Governor's Program on Abstinence, or GPA—and one of many people whose zeal for eradicating sexual activity among young people has helped elevate a certain "truth," as she and many other advocates call their complete censure of all extramarital sex, into an official statewide message trumpeted by politicians, teachers and budding teen political advocates. The fact that Burbank and others were holding a rally to promote abstinence, which she calls "the age-old practice of self-government," at the seat of actual government speaks to the murky political territory that abstinence-only education has come to occupy.

Using money that flows from Washington through the governor's office, GPA leaders presented an award to Governor Kathleen Blanco, a Democrat who inherited the program from her Republican predecessor. Then the hordes of teens in matching blue GPA T-shirts lunched on chicken and biscuits at the governor's mansion. As Curtis Lipscomb, a 17-year-old who served as membership director of his high school's GPA club in Ouachita, Louisiana, pointed out, "There's not many clubs that the government backs and supports with all its power."

That's high school clubs Lipscomb is talking about, and he's right. In fact, while federally funded programs for children, from school lunches to childcare, are being slashed, abstinence-only education is expanding. In 1996, when Congress approved the Social Security Act, one of several sources of federal funding for abstinence education, Washington put just $4 million toward such programs. Since then, more than $700 million has been lavished on programs that discourage sex; and President Bush has requested a total of $206 million for the next fiscal year.

Louisiana's program has come under fire for its religious content. In 2002, in response to a suit brought by the ACLU, a Louisiana district court found that the program violated the separation of church and state. This past June the same court ruled that the program had sufficiently changed itself so that even though its materials still contained religious references, its main purpose wasn't to advance religion. Even now religion clearly underlies the program's teachings, and it continues to function as a vehicle for funneling government cash to key figures on Louisiana's Christian right. But to discourage teens

Sharon Lerner is a senior fellow at the Center for New York City Affairs at New School University. Research support for this article was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.

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from having sex, the program has shifted its emphasis away from God's punishment and more squarely onto the dangers of STDs. Meanwhile, barred from religious proselytizing, the program devotes much of its energy to a somewhat less predictable but equally unsettling purpose: political recruitment and advocacy.

Though by law it is supposed to focus only on promoting abstinence outside marriage, Louisiana's program also connects young people to the broader conservative politics surrounding the abstinence-only movement. The strategy helps turn out the next generation of foot soldiers who can, in turn, provide the grassroots political support necessary to perpetuate such programs in the long term. "The right has done an extremely effective and aggressive job of trying to orient and train young people on their political goals, philosophy and techniques," says Elliot Mincberg, vice president and legal director of People for the American Way. Rather than teach about religious beliefs, which many of the people drawn to Louisiana's abstinence program already have, the governor's program links those ideas to political action. Says Mincberg, "They're suggesting you can't be a good Christian unless you support this particular political point of view."

High school abstinence clubs 'serve as training ground for young abstinence advocates,' according to the program's own materials.

For the past few years the governor's program has used the $1.6 million in federal funds it receives yearly to teach abstinence to middle schoolers, run a website and create "GPA Clubs," which are now in 285 high schools and fourteen colleges throughout Louisiana. For many, the voluntary clubs' primary function is social. "It gives you friends at your school... [who] will support you in your stand to say no," Lipscomb says of his GPA club. Sometimes members wear their GPA T-shirts so they can be identified, he says. "And you can go hang with them if you don't feel comfortable around another group that might be talking about sex or participating in it."

Rustin Loyd, 19, describes the GPA club he runs at Southeastern Louisiana University as equally supportive, though more casual. "We're all really close friends," Loyd says of his fellow club members. "We see each other a lot. It's not just, 'My name's Rustin, I haven't had sex in three weeks.'"

In addition to social support, GPA clubs "serve as training ground for young abstinence advocates," according to the program's own materials. The governor's program holds a yearly legislative caucus that, like the April event, is held at the capitol. At it, teens sit in legislators' seats and mull over mock legislation, learning, according to GPA materials, "how to debate and pass legislation and how to maneuver through parliamentary procedures."

Or, as Curtis Lipscomb, who attended this year's caucus, puts it: "We debated over pretend bills about sex." Many proposals deal directly with the issue of teaching abstinence, though the conference—held this year on the anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision—also hones teens' debating skills on other favorite culture-war topics, including abortion. Because GPA members tend to be on the same side in the bitter battles over these questions, the program brought in an adult to argue the pro-choice, pro–sex education side this year, according to GPA director Gail Dignam. Who won the debates?

"The kids did, of course," says Dignam.

When Odessey Terzi attended the legislative meeting two years ago, she made the case for a mock law that would require condom packages to warn that they're not effective against all STDs. Terzi, a college student who also went to the meeting in April, says she is majoring in political science and planning on attending law school so she can become a politician and push for legislation that, like the GPA, furthers traditional values. If she does reach higher office, says Terzi, "I would definitely work to continue to promote funding for a program like this."

The governor's program schools students in political etiquette so they can get to that point. Materials advise students who attend the legislative conference to send a follow-up letter thanking Louisiana's Speaker of the House for the event and issue a press release touting its success to local newspapers. And the program chose a select few students to go to a weeklong leadership institute in Washington, where they met with members of Congress who support abstinence-only education.

The program materials posted on the web also include a study guide that quizzes teens about the number and terms of state and federal legislators as well as about people in positions of power at the Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control. And the "News You Can Use" section of the GPA website, www.abstinencedu.com, is filled with minutely detailed, if biased, policy stories related to abstinence. A March 8 story about an amendment to the welfare reform law that would affect abstinence funding refers to opponents of abstinence-only education as "condom pushers," for instance. And another derides a negative evaluation of an abstinence program as "shakier than school-lunch jello."

GPA clubs are encouraged to select a public relations director, a student who is supposed to raise awareness about abstinence. The program issues pre-fab forms for PR directors to give to local mayors as well as to town and city councils so they can proclaim an official awareness day for STDs "and advocate abstinence as the solution." All club members are encouraged to hone their debating skills, though. One exercise called "talk radio" has students practice giving pithy one-minute summaries on hot-button issues such as whether the United Nations should continue to distribute condoms in Third World countries and whether government should promote both abstinence and condoms.

At least one person, a former state legislator named Kay Iles, is a paid contractor for the GPA whose sole responsibility is to act as a liaison between the program and a legislator. GPA staff have also worked to export their program to other countries. There are now forty clubs in Trinidad and Tobago modeled after the GPA clubs, and Louisiana's abstinence-only middle school curriculum is also being taught there. GPA representatives recently went to Poland to discuss the possible implementation of the program in that country.

The legality of using abstinence-only dollars for such pur-

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poses is dubious. The provision of the Social Security Act that provides the GPA's funding clearly spells out that the money can be used only for teaching about the benefits of abstaining from sex—a point abstinence proponents have often made in their efforts to make sure contractors don't let slip any positive information about birth control (a subject that is supposed to be mentioned only in terms of its risks). But the promotion of the program itself seems to fall outside the scope of the law.

More generally, the Office of Management and Budget forbids the use of federal funding for grassroots appeals that have a "reasonably foreseeable consequence" of leading to concerted action. Yet the political aspects of the governor's program and other abstinence-only projects have thus far gone unchallenged. Kay Guinane, counsel for the Nonprofit Advocacy Project at OMB Watch, says the GPA's activities may very well violate the anti-lobbying law and certainly highlight a double-standard in government oversight. "If [the GPA] were a group that didn't support abstinence-only and had the exact same activities, they would find themselves audited in a heartbeat," says Guinane, who points to several groups that differ from the Administration's position on abstinence education. The nonprofit Advocates for Youth, a group that supports giving teens information about contraception, for instance, has been audited three times by different federal offices. (None of the audits turned up any improprieties, though the group has not yet received the final report on the third investigation.)

The program's official language has been secularized, but a list of its grant recipients reads like a who's who of the religious right.

Despite the 2002 lawsuit, which required the GPA to stop promoting religion, the program still has strong ties to Christian organizations and posts links to explicitly religious articles on its website. Religious groups have embraced the governor's program—and, by extension, the governor. And the GPA has drawn on them for volunteers, paid speakers and other kinds of support. As Roderick Hawkins, a spokesman for Governor Blanco, explains it, "In our state culture, sometimes you have to knock on some religious doors to spread the message."

In the early days of the governor's program, many of these groups were paid directly to spread the abstinence message, and they happily touted their religious achievements. "December was an excellen[t] month for our program, we were able to focus on the virgin birth and make it apparent that God desire[s] sexual purity as a way of life," read a 1999 monthly report of a Christian organization known as the Rapides Station Community Ministries. In August 2001 the group proudly announced it had used the money to pay for a back-to-school youth revival, in which a minister "proclaim[ed] God's word with power as to why we should live pure and holy."

In 2002, after the ACLU sued then-Governor Mike Foster and Dan Richey, director of the program at the time, US District Court Judge Thomas Porteous Jr. agreed that the state was using federal abstinence-only money to promote religion. The parties settled the suit with the agreement that the program would stop advancing religion. Since then the GPA has begun paying individual volunteers to teach the program's standardized abstinence curriculum rather than giving grants to organizations, which can fall into the legal category of "pervasively sectarian"—or primarily religious in purpose.

The change took care of at least one of the program's legal problems; individuals cannot be considered pervasively sectarian. Yet many of the same people are still involved, only paid differently. The program no longer funds the "Just Say Whoa!" theater group, for example, which before 2002 spent some of its money putting on a play featuring a character called "bible guy" who advises the teen audience that "As Christians, our bodies belong to the Lord, not to us. God wants more for you than a one-night stand." But the GPA continues to fund the program's creator, Patricia Reeves. And though it stopped giving grants to the Louisiana Family Forum, the local affiliate of the national religious group Focus on the Family, the program now directly employs a former board member of the forum, Nancy Victory, project director of the GPA website.

Even though the GPA's official language has been somewhat secularized, a list of individual grant recipients obtained through the Freedom of Information Act still reads like a who's who of the religious right. Last year the Rev. Billy McCormack, known for his political support of former Klansman David Duke in the 1980s, received a grant. Grantees funded through June of this year include John Hogue, founder of the Louisiana Christian Coalition, and the Rev. Bill Shanks, who leads the local chapter of the antiabortion group Operation Rescue. At least eight grantees receiving funds through June are affiliated with crisis pregnancy centers that counsel against abortion, a figure that's in keeping with the national average: According to SIECUS, the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, more than one-quarter of organizations receiving federal abstinence-only money are explicitly antichoice.

While the program for the April conference makes no mention of their religious affiliations, most presenters and speakers there also work for religious institutions, including the keynote presenter, Jacob Aranza, a founding pastor at Our Savior's Church; Clifton LeJeune, pastor of the Jesus Worship Center; Christian rockers Kelly Pease and Joshua Blakesley; and Sidney Hidalgo, children's pastor at a place called the Harvest, a Christian ministry whose mission includes "evangeliz[ing] the unchurched while adoring God."

Even Burbank, officially the GPA's medical consultant, clearly has faith-based reasons for her positions. She made a secular argument at the abstinence rally, warning teens about sexually transmitted diseases and heartbreak. And when asked afterward why she was so passionate about abstinence, Burbank said she was moved to her work "as a pediatrician and a parent of young adults." But during a videotaped interview with Father M. Jeffery Bayhi, which is available over the Internet, she makes her religious reasons for opposing extramarital sex clear. "There's no way around God's best plan for us," she tells Bayhi, who works for Closer Walk Ministries, a Catholic group devoted to "proclaiming the great mercy of God." One-night

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stands and casual sex, she goes on to say, "are not the deep loving encounters that God had planned."

In any case, the GPA website provides a more technical response to the question of what premarital sexual acts are "okay," warning readers to avoid "just about anything accompanied by moaning," as one article posted there puts it. Another lists various problems with condoms, concluding that "the condom's biggest flaw is that those using it to prevent the conception of another human being are offending God."

The skeptic could be forgiven for wondering how much of this actually deters teens from having sex. The GPA's Dignam says an evaluation of the entire program is now being designed. In the meantime, Dignam has explained that the GPA's curriculum for middle school students was "scientifically designed in 1983" and that an evaluation of the curriculum "consistently showed a 40% movement from sexual activity to non-sexual activity among the teen program participants during a 3.5-year period." The governor's office was unable to provide the study containing this figure, saying only that it came from an unpublished report funded by the Office of Population Affairs. And Douglas Kirby, a senior research scientist at ETR Associates who specializes in the evaluation of teen pregnancy prevention plans, says that no study that meets "reasonable research criteria" has yet shown that any abstinence-only program reduces sexual activity at all—let alone by 40 percent.

Meanwhile, if students are truly persuaded by the curriculum, which contains lessons on controlling natural desires and proposes visits to nursing homes, games of putt-putt golf and cleaning the garage as alternatives to sex, Louisiana will have a hard time proving it with a new evaluation. State law forbids surveying students about their personal beliefs or practices relating to sex—a provision that makes it impossible for researchers to evaluate the impact of the GPA on sexual activity.

Abstinence programs nationwide likewise haven't proved their effectiveness. Several have resisted evaluation, objecting to having their participants asked sexually explicit questions. The most extensive study yet, commissioned by the Department of Health and Human Services and released in June, doesn't address when teens initiate sex or their rates of sexually transmitted diseases. Rather, it looks at how four programs that were picked specifically because they were well implemented and consented to the evaluation (at least one federally funded program refused) affect knowledge and intentions around sex.

The difficulty of showing the impact of abstinence-only education programs stems in large part from the difficulty of persuading students to refrain from having sex. (Indeed, the effort to change their political views may be easier, as well as more expedient.) And abstinence-only programs may leave participants more likely to engage in risky sex. A 2005 study by Peter Bearman and Hanna Bruckner published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that while teens who promised to stay virgins delayed sex by an average of eighteen months and had fewer sexual partners, they were less likely to use contraception when they eventually did have sex. Virginity pledgers had almost the same rates of sexually transmitted diseases as the rest of teens—6.4 percent versus 6.9 percent.

No one on the capitol steps in Baton Rouge on that April

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morning seems to be judging the virginity pledge as an exercise in futility, though. Indeed, the crowd of teens so revved up by Dee Burbank's speech grows solemn as a robed judge appears and asks them to raise their right hands. "Do you swear or affirm to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God?" Judge Glenn Gremillion asks the crowd before telling them to repeat after him: "I promise to abstain from all sexual activity from this day until I'm married."

Looking around, it's hard to imagine how this vow will affect the teens echoing Judge Gremillion's words. Using Bearman and Bruckner's research as a predictor, 88 percent of them will go on to have premarital sex. Some, undoubtedly, already have. Rachel Kappelman, a graduating senior at the Logansport High School GPA club, thinks the group may be most useful for these students. "This is not the virgin club," says Kappelman. "You get to see people who have made mistakes and have felt bad about it and join abstinence."

Kappelman, who was president of her GPA club during the last school year, admits that at first she "just signed up for it to get out of class." But, perhaps because she has two sisters who gave birth out of wedlock, she has developed a passion for the program and has even taken it upon herself to counsel girls who get pregnant or feel pressured to have sex. "If it's a Friday night and you're out with your boyfriend and you want to call one of us, we'll come get you in a heartbeat," she says.

As she sees it, her experience with the GPA has taught her to take a stand against a wide range of problems, including "unwed mothers, abortion, STDs, pressure from guys and pressure from girls." What's more, Kappelman feels she's learned the best way to address these complicated moral and personal issues. "Whenever it comes down to it, everything our club does has everything in the world to do with government," says the 17-year-old as she stands in front of the capitol building. "Coming here and seeing how it works and seeing that we have a chance to argue and debate things lets us know that hey, if we want to take a stand against something that's not going the way we want to or if at any time our rights are being pushed, all we have to do is push back to get our voice out." ■

BEHIND CAPITOL HILL'S DEMOCRATIC WAR HAWKS STANDS AN ARMY OF 'ENABLERS.'

The Strategic Class

ARI BERMAN

In July 2002, at the first Senate hearing on Iraq, then–Senate Foreign Relations Committee chair Joe Biden pledged his allegiance to Bush's war. Ever since, the blunt-spoken Biden has seized every opportunity to dismiss antiwar critics within his own party, vocally denouncing Bush's handling of the war while doggedly supporting the war effort itself. Biden carried this message into the Kerry campaign as the candidate's closest foreign policy confidant, and a few days after announcing his own intention to run for the presidency in 2008, he gave a major speech at the Brookings Institution in which he criticized rising calls for withdrawal as a "gigantic mistake."

KAREN CALDICOTT

The Democrats' speculative front-runner for '08, Hillary Clinton, has offered similarly hawkish rhetoric. "If we were to artificially set a deadline of some sort, that would be like a green light to the terrorists, and we can't afford to do that," Clinton told CBS in February. Instead, she recently proposed enlarging the Army by 80,000 troops "to respond to threats wherever danger lies." Clinton, a member of the Armed Services Committee, appears more comfortable accommodating the President's Iraq policy than opposing it, and her early and sustained support for the war (and frequent photo-ops with the troops) supposedly reinforces her national security credentials.

The prominence of party leaders like Biden and Clinton, and of a slew of other potential prowar candidates who support the US invasion and occupation of Iraq, presents the Democrats with an odd dilemma: At a time when the American people are turning against the Iraq War and favor a withdrawal of US troops, and British and American leaders are publicly discussing a partial pullback, the leading Democratic presidential candidates for '08 are unapologetic war hawks. Nearly 60 percent of Americans now oppose the war, according to recent polling. Sixty-three percent want US troops brought home within the next year. Yet a recent *National Journal* "insiders poll" found that a similar margin of Democratic members of Congress reject setting any timetable. The possibility that America's military presence in Iraq may be doing more harm than good is considered beyond the pale of "sophisticated" debate.

The continued high standing of the hawks has been made possible by their enablers in the strategic class—the foreign policy advisers, think-tank specialists and pundits. Their presumed expertise gives the strategic class a unique license to speak for the party on national security issues. This group has always been quietly influential, but since 9/11 it has risen in prominence, egging on and underpinning elected officials, crowding out dissenters within its own ranks and becoming increasingly ideologically monolithic. So far its members remain unchallenged. It's more than a little ironic that the people who got Iraq so wrong continue to tell the Democrats how to get it right.

Ari Berman, who writes The Nation*'s Daily Outrage weblog, is a Ralph Shikes Fellow at the Public Concern Foundation. He last wrote for the magazine about Al Gore's new youth cable channel, Current.*

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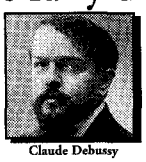
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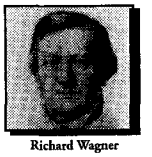
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It's helpful to think of the Democratic strategic class as a pyramid. At the top are politicians like Biden and Clinton, forming the most important and visible public face. Just below are high-ranking former government officials, like UN ambassador Richard Holbrooke, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Assistant Secretary of State Jamie Rubin. These are the people who devise and execute foreign policy and frame the substance of the message. Virtually all the top advisers supported the Iraq War; Holbrooke, who's been dubbed the "closest thing the party has to a Kissinger" by one foreign policy analyst, even tacked to Bush's right, arguing in February 2003 that anything less than an invasion of Iraq would undermine international law. Many of the officials held high-ranking positions in the Kerry campaign. Holbrooke, frequently mentioned as a potential Secretary of State, urged Kerry to keep his vision on Iraq "deliberately vague," the *New York Observer* reported. Rubin appeared on television sixty times in May 2004 alone. Nine days before the election, Holbrooke addressed the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and reiterated Kerry's support for the war and occupation, belittled European negotiations with Iran on its nuclear program and endorsed the Israeli separation wall. HARDLY A DOVE AMONG DEMS' BRAIN TRUSTERS, read a headline from the *Forward* newspaper.

Despite growing evidence that Bush's actions in Iraq have been a colossal failure, the strategic class 'pyramid' remains essentially in place.

Underneath the top policy officials are the anointed regional experts, who play an instrumental role in legitimizing the politicians' arguments and drumming up support inside the Beltway for impending conflicts in faraway lands. Brookings fellow and former CIA official Kenneth Pollack's book *The Threatening Storm: The Case for Invading Iraq* played precisely that function for wavering Democratic elites in the run-up to war, turning "more doves into hawks than Richard Perle, Laurie Mylroie and George W. Bush combined," wrote *Slate*'s Chris Suellentrop in March 2003. "In Washington, it's not uncommon to hear fence-straddlers qualify their ambivalence about an Iraq war with the sentiment, 'Of course, I haven't read the Pollack book yet.'"

The likes of Pollack are greatly bolstered by a second front of national security specialists at prestigious think tanks like Brookings, the Council on Foreign Relations, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Center for Strategic and International Studies and the Center for American Progress. Though they often toil in obscurity, the think-tank officials form a necessary echo chamber for the political class, appearing on television and writing issue briefs while providing, through their organizations, a platform on which candidates can appear "robust" in the national security realm. As one example, Stephen Walt, a leading foreign policy expert and academic dean of Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, says that "Brookings was basically supportive of the war in Iraq. If Brookings is signing on to a major foreign policy initiative of a Republican Administration, that doesn't give the Democratic mainstream much room to mount a really forceful critique of the incumbent foreign policy." Much of Kerry's campaign platform—with its calls to add 40,000 troops to the military, preserve the doctrine of pre-emptive war and stay the course in Iraq—read as if it had been lifted verbatim from a Brookings strategy memo.

At the bottom of the pyramid are the liberal hawks in the punditocracy, figures like *New Republic* editor Peter Beinart, *Time* writer Joe Klein and *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman. These pundits, along with purely partisan outfits like the Democratic Leadership Council's Progressive Policy Institute (PPI), help to both set the agenda and frame the debate. The journalistic hawks churn out the agitprop that the more respectable think tanks turn into "serious" scholarship, some of which eventually becomes policy, or at least talking points, when adopted by the politicians.

Central to the liberal hawks' mission is a challenge to other Democrats that they too must become "national security Democrats," to borrow a phrase coined by Holbrooke. To talk about national security a Democrat must be a national security Democrat, and to be a national security Democrat, a Democrat must enthusiastically support a militarized "war on terror," protracted occupation in Iraq, "muscular" democratization and ever-larger defense budgets. The liberal hawks caricature other Democrats just as Republicans long stereotyped them. The pundits magnify the perception that Democrats are soft on national security, and they influence how consultants view public opinion and develop the message for candidates. In that sense, the bottom of the pyramid is always interacting with the top. It matters little that people like Beinart have no national security experience—as long as the hawks identify themselves as national security Democrats, they're free to play the game.

Today, despite the growing evidence that the Bush Administration's actions in Iraq have been a colossal—some would say criminal—failure, what's striking is how much of the pyramid remains essentially in place. As the Iraqi insurgency turned increasingly violent, and the much-hyped WMDs never turned up, the hawks attempted a bit of self-evaluation. *Slate* and *The New Republic* both hosted windy pseudo–mea culpa forums. Of the eight liberal hawks invited by *Slate*, journalist Fred Kaplan remarked, "I seem to be the only one in the club who's changed his mind." *TNR*'s confession was even more limited, with Beinart admitting that he overcame his distrust of Bush so that he could "feel superior to the Democrats." Pollack took part in both forums, and then earned five figures for an *Atlantic Monthly* essay on "what went wrong." Even at their darkest hour, the strategic class found a way to profit from its errors, coalescing around a view that its members had been misled by the Bush Administration and that too little planning, too few troops and too much ideology were largely to blame for the chaos in Iraq. The hawks decided it was acceptable to criticize the execution of the war, but not the war itself—a view Kerry found particularly attractive. A "yes, but" or "no, but" mentality defined this thinking. Having subsequently pinned the blame for Kerry's defeat largely on the political consultants or the candidate himself, the strategic class has moved forward largely unscarred.

Biden and Clinton still have more influence than antiwar politicians like Ted Kennedy or Russ Feingold. No one has replaced

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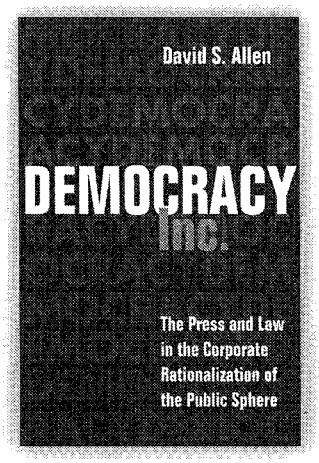

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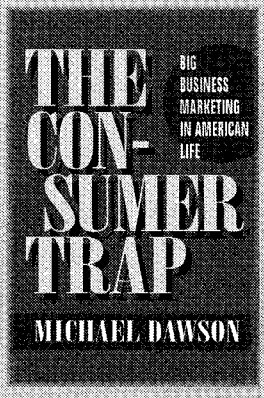

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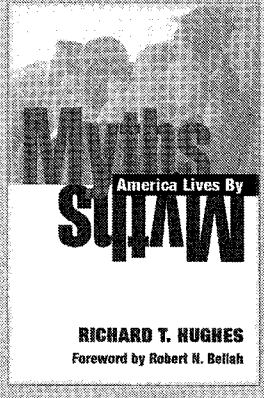

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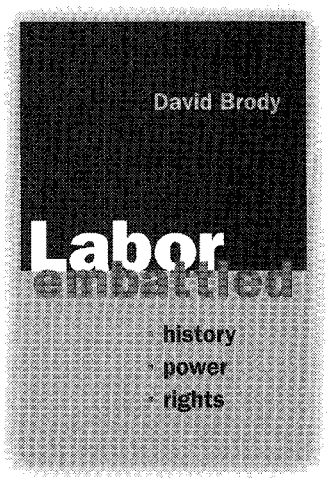

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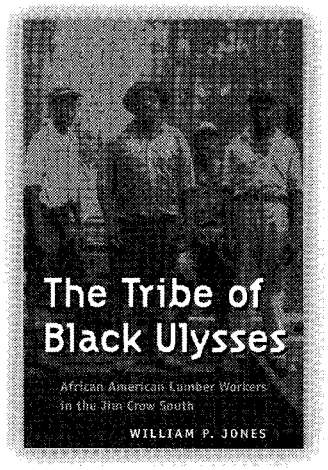

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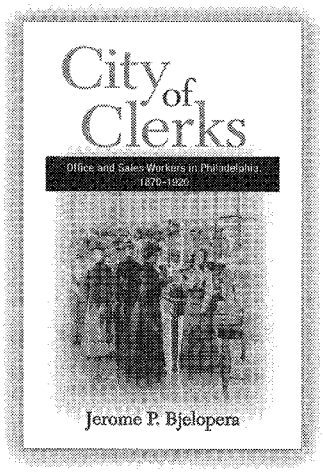

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Holbrooke or Albright. Pollack continues to thrive at Brookings and, despite never visiting the country, has a new book out about Iran. Shortly after the election, Beinart penned a 5,683-word essay calling on hawkish Democrats to repudiate "softs" like MoveOn.org and Michael Moore; the essay won Beinart—already a fellow at Brookings—a $650,000 book deal and high-profile visibility on the Washington ideas circuit. Subsequently a statement of leading policy apparatchiks on the PPI publication *Blueprint* challenged fellow Democrats to make fighting Islamic totalitarianism the central organizing principle of the party. Replace the words "Al Qaeda" with "Soviet Union" and the essay seemed straight out of 1947–48; the militarized post-9/11 climate of fear had reincarnated the cold war Democrat. A number of leading specialists signed a letter by the neoconservative Project for the New American Century asking Congress to boost the defense budget and increase the size of the military by 25,000 troops each year over the next several years. The "Third Way" group of conservative Senate Democrats recently introduced a similar proposal.

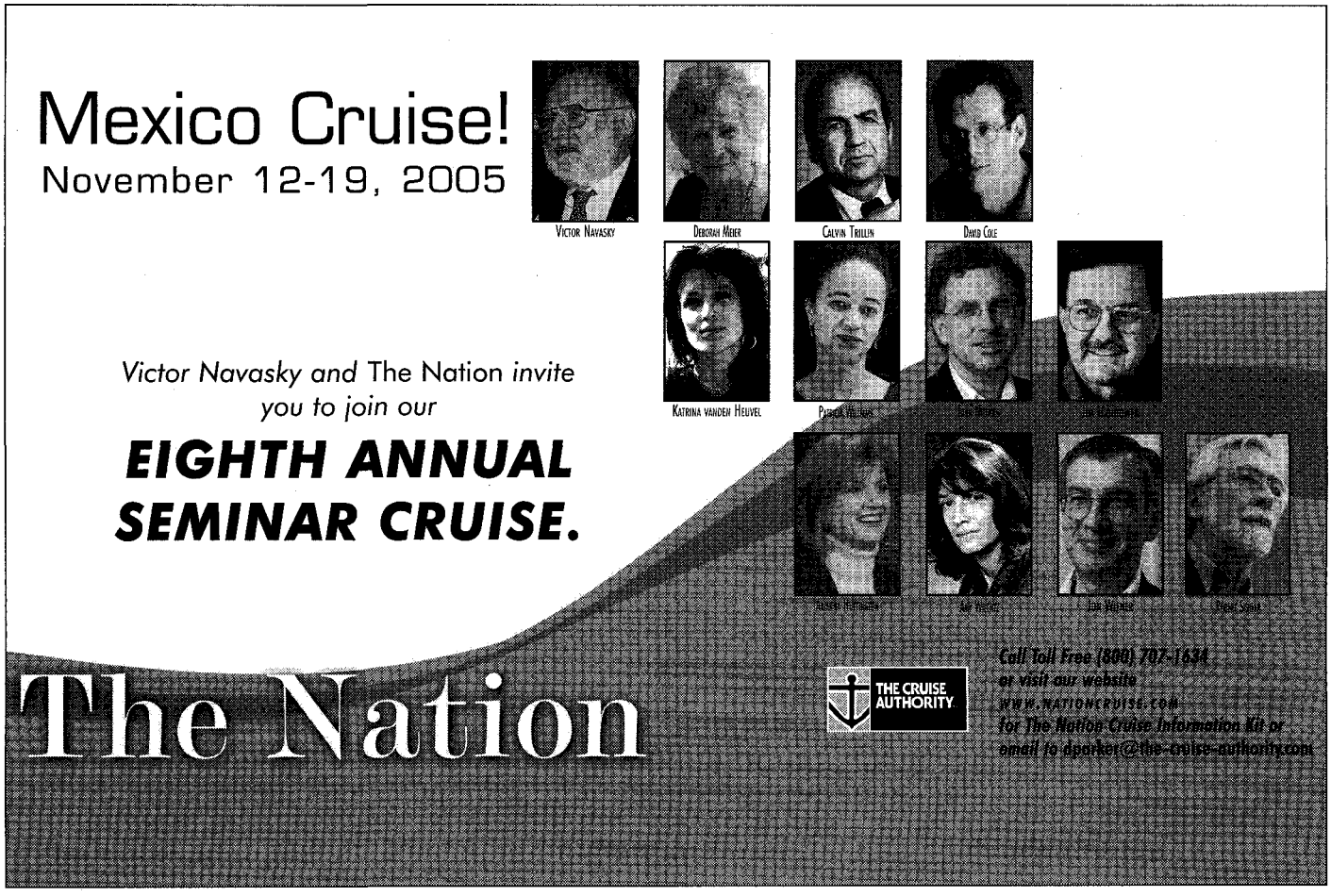
"There's an approach which says, 'Let's raise the stakes and call,'" says former Senator Gary Hart, a rare voice of principled opposition in the party today. "That if Republicans want a ten-division Army, let's be for a twelve-division Army. I think that's just nonsense, frankly. It's stupid policy. Trying to get on the other side of the Republicans is folly, both politically and substantively."

If Hart is correct, then why does so much of the Democratic strategic class march in lockstep? There's no simple answer. The insularity of Washington, pressures of careerism, fear of appearing soft and the absence of institutional alternatives all contribute to a limiting of the debate. Bill Clinton's misguided political dictum that the public "would rather have somebody who's strong and wrong than somebody who's weak and right" applies equally to the strategic class.

"Everybody's on the make," says Steve Clemons of the New America Foundation, who led the fight against John Bolton from his blog, The Washington Note. "They're all worried about their next government job. People pull their punches or try to craft years in advance what sort of positions they're gonna be up for. The culture of Washington is very risk-averse." Adds Walt, "It's pretty hard to go wrong right now taking a hard-line position. There's enough places or institutions that will take care of you. Outside of academia, if you take positions on the other side, there's just nowhere near the level of institutional support."

Those insiders who doubt the wisdom of a hawkish course often get the cold shoulder if they stray too far from the strategic line. After criticizing the rush to war, Ivo Daalder of Brookings became the foreign policy point man for Howard Dean's insurgent campaign. Many of Daalder's colleagues at Brookings and elsewhere sharply criticized Dean, and afterward unnamed Democratic insiders bragged to *The New Republic* that Dean's advisers would never work again. That, of course, didn't happen, but Daalder and others have since tempered their opposition rhetoric. Today Daalder blames the antiwar movement for Dean's defeat and calls for more troops in Iraq.

For daring to tackle the liberal hawk consensus in his recent



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book *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*, Anatol Lieven, who is British and until recently a fellow at the Carnegie Endowment, got lumped into the "anti-American" category by Jonathan Tepperman of the Council on Foreign Relations in the *New York Times Book Review*. "It is hardly an anti-American position to suggest that Americans today can learn much from the work of great Americans of the past like Reinhold Niebuhr and J.W. Fulbright," Lieven wrote in reply. He has since left Carnegie and joined Clemons at the New America Foundation, a centrist think tank that has acquired a maverick reputation. New America, along with places like the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy—an anti-imperial umbrella of thinkers on the left, right and center—now form a sort of dissident establishment.

Owing to their distinction, the Democratic strategic class, consisting of the party's leading foreign policy thinkers, could have provided a powerful check on a reckless Administration intent on rushing to war. Instead, it bears partial responsibility for the war's costs: more than 1,800 American fatalities, thousands of maimed and wounded US soldiers, many more dead Iraqi civilians, spiraling worldwide anti-Americanism, surging world oil prices, a new breeding ground for Al Qaeda, multiplying terror attacks abroad and mounting economic insecurity at home.

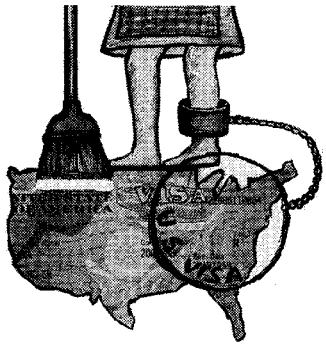
At the same time, talking tough on Iraq has been a disastrous moral, tactical and political miscalculation for Democrats. A recent Democracy Corps poll found that Iraq tops the list of factors motivating voter discontent toward President Bush. "This is a country almost settled on the need for change," political consultants Stan Greenberg and James Carville write. Yet Democrats will only prosper if they pose "sharp choices," something the strategic class has been unwilling or unable to do. A few small progressive think tanks, helped by the dissident establishment, have tried to pry open badly needed institutional space for a bolder national security policy. A few courageous elected officials are attempting to drum up Congressional support for withdrawal. Thus far, the hawks have drowned them out. Unless and until the strategic class transforms or declines in stature, the Democrats beholden to them will be doomed to repeat their Iraq mistakes. ■

ANTI-TRAFFICKING EFFORTS TOO OFTEN NEGLECT OTHER FORMS OF FORCED LABOR.

Oversexed

DEBBIE NATHAN

A young Kenyan woman named Alice B. is classified by the US government as a victim of human trafficking, but you've probably never heard of her case, because the work she was forced to do didn't involve turning tricks. Alice, who did not want to use her last name for fear of retaliation, took a childcare job a few years ago that required her to move from Africa to the Bay Area. She agreed to work regular hours for about $200 a week. But when she got to California, her boss—a prominent Kenyan woman journalist—confiscated Alice's visa and made her baby-sit day and night for as little as $50 a month. Alice fled after several months and notified authorities. Eventually she got legal residency under a federal law known as the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). The law, she says, has helped her put her life back together.



KAREN CALDICOTT

First passed in late 2000, the TVPA slaps penalties onto those who move people across borders and force them to work against their will. It also offers assistance, including permission to settle in the United States, to immigrant victims like Alice.

On paper the law looks good. But in practice it hasn't helped many people so far, and it's hurt others, while placing undue emphasis on commercial sex work and downplaying the plight of victims in other jobs, like Alice. Probably because she was "just" an imprisoned nanny and not a brothel captive, the Feds declined to criminally prosecute her boss, and they hardly publicized her case. That's often what happens with people forced to work in factories, fields, restaurants and homes—and there are plenty of them in the United States. Meanwhile, government press releases and the news are rife with accounts of "sex slaves"—even though the limited evidence that exists suggests sex work is not the most common type of forced labor, and even though most immigrants who work as prostitutes do so voluntarily.

Officially, TVPA enforcers count "voluntary" prostitutes as victims of trafficking and go out looking for them. But once found, these so-called victims are often deported. According to Dawn Passar, a Thai immigrant who has worked for years doing AIDS prevention with San Francisco–area prostitutes, "I've never met a Thai woman smuggled in for sex work who didn't know that's what she'd be coming here to do." But the women often get snared in massage parlor raids and are slated for removal from the country. "It costs $40,000 to get legal help," says Passar. "To pay, they have to do even more sex work."

The TVPA is also policing the speech of labor- and women's-rights groups, and sanctioning countries—like Cuba and Venezuela—whose politics the US government doesn't like. The law's split personality derives from the fact that a split group created it. On one side were evangelical Christians, with their typical fears of foreigners, leftists and sex—and their morbid fascina-

Debbie Nathan, a New York City–based writer, is the author of Women and Other Aliens: Essays From the U.S.-Mexican Border.

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tion with forced prostitution, even though more people may be forced to pick broccoli than to rent out their genitals. Then there were feminists whose concern about the exploitation of women—like the evangelicals'—also fixated on commercial sex. The evangelicals and feminists seized the lobbying reins by making common cause around what both call "sex slavery." For evangelicals the deal was a bargain. For feminists it's turned Faustian. Meanwhile, the pact between these two groups remains under most progressives' radar. It seems too weird to imagine.

Gloria Steinem working with the likes of Chuck Colson? It makes sense if one looks at history, going back about a decade. That's when US antiporn feminists gave up trying to ban sexual imagery and shifted their energies to prostitution. Former antiporn activist Laura Lederer, for example, helped develop an "abolitionist" movement that aims to ban all commercial sex acts, involuntary and voluntary—even if prostitutes themselves protest the prohibition. There's no such thing as consent, as far as abolitionist organizations, like the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women, are concerned. For them, everyone who crosses borders to work in prostitution is a "trafficking" victim.

Evangelicals and feminists made common cause around what they call 'sex slavery.' The result was a law with a split personality.

Other feminists—particularly those who work with immigrants and women in developing countries—disagree. Activist theorists like Ann Snitow and Carole Vance view prostitution as just one of many onerous and often sexist jobs available to poor women who migrate to support their families. They reject the idea of singling it out for opprobrium if it's done voluntarily, by adults. Wary of law-and-order solutions to structural economic and social problems, these feminists talk about "sex work" and encourage members of the trade to unionize. Organizing in countries like India, they note, has educated voluntary prostitutes to identify captives in the brothels and help liberate them. That approach combats trafficking better than does relying on often corrupt, macho police. Even do-gooder raids frequently end with "victims" being deported—or fleeing their "rescuers" and returning to the brothels. Organizing also helps sex workers protect themselves from sexually transmitted disease, violence and exploitation by pimps. Organizing would be much easier if prostitution were decriminalized, proponents of this approach believe. It would promote gender and socioeconomic equality—making it easier for sex workers to leave the trade if they wish to.

During the 1990s feminists from the abolitionist and the sex-work camps engaged in spirited debate about prostitution and the definition of trafficking, at gatherings such as the UN Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing in 1995. But soon the discussion was pre-empted by another, monolithic voice: that of the evangelicals.

In 1998, under the tutelage of Michael Horowitz, of the neocon think tank the Hudson Institute, leaders like Watergate felon Colson—who found Jesus while in prison—and Richard Land, head of the ethics and religious liberty commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, lobbied successfully for the Religious Freedom Act, which makes "promoting religious freedom" a "core objective of U.S. foreign policy," according to the State Department. The act earned evangelicals a State Department office and an at-large ambassadorship. It justified funding for "faith-based" groups to monitor religious persecution abroad. It gave evangelicals clout in decisions to sanction nations deemed out of compliance. And it established the US Christian right as a player in the international human-rights field.

While pushing the Religious Freedom Act, Colson, Land and their allies gained a certain ecumenical cachet by working with other constituencies, such as Jewish rabbis and politicians who were troubled by persecution. With their new-found respectability, the evangelicals proceeded to the trafficking issue and linked up with abolitionist feminists. The two groups garnered support from conservative New Jersey Congressman Christopher Smith. An evangelical and arch-foe of *Roe v. Wade*, Smith is co-chair of the House's "Pro-Life Caucus" and has written a spate of legislation banning US financial backing for family-planning clinics in the Third World that offer abortions. But just as feminists joined moral conservatives on the Meese Commission to get porn outlawed in the 1980s, they were willing to wheel and deal with people like Smith around the trafficking issue.

By the late 1990s the media were full of stories about the globalizing push to move people around the world for forced and child labor. Little boys toiling on cocoa bean plantations in Cameroon, Mexican deaf mutes made to sell tchotchkes on the streets of New York—clearly, many trafficking victims were not employed in brothels. But Representative Smith drafted a bill that limited the definition of trafficking to work involving sex—whether coerced or not—and eliminated from consideration all victims except women and children.

Labor-rights-oriented groups objected, and the late Senator Paul Wellstone wrote most of the TVPA's final wording. It outlaws all forced work—not just prostitution, and not just labor done by women and children. For the TVPA coercion is required in order to prosecute perpetrators and help victims. But abolitionist feminists and evangelicals retained language that labels as "trafficking" all smuggling of immigrants into prostitution—even if they knew what line of work they'd be getting into and are doing it voluntarily, and even though immigrants working voluntarily as prostitutes probably far outnumber those who are coerced, both internationally and in this country, according to researchers such as University of West Indies sociologist Kemala Kempadoo, who studies migration and sex work. In a slick rhetorical maneuver, the TVPA offers no assistance to individuals who've been voluntarily smuggled to work as prostitutes, yet it counts them as "trafficking" victims, along with brothel prisoners. The conflation inflates the severity of the "sex slave" problem in the public mind.

The TVPA is now almost five years old. It created a "Trafficking in Persons" office in the State Department and employs yet another at-large ambassador—currently John Miller, a former Republican congressman from Washington State. The Bush Administration has earmarked about $150 million to enforce the law and help victims. Much of the money has gone to NGOs

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with long experience in assisting immigrants suffering from problems such as domestic violence and labor exploitation. But funding is also being snapped up by "faith-based" groups who've never before done this kind of work. Many, like Beverly LaHaye's Concerned Women for America, are obsessed with rescuing prostitutes from moral turpitude. For them, commercial sex is far worse than other exploitative work poor people do—forced or not.

The government encourages the fixation. The TVPA's preamble, written in 2000, estimated that each year the United States was receiving 50,000 trafficked people. All were assumed to be women and children—by far the likeliest groups to be pressed into prostitution. Not until 2003, when the TVPA was amended (and the 50,000 annual victim figure slashed to at most 20,000), did the State Department include men in its estimate.

Forced prostitution clearly does exist in the United States. In one notorious case, five Mexicans—including three women—pleaded guilty to recruiting teen girls in Mexico with promises of good jobs across the border, imprisoning four of them in a house in Plainfield, New Jersey, and making them have sex six days a week with paying customers. A similar scenario in New York City led to guilty pleas in April by a family of pimps.

The available figures suggest that the nation harbors more enslaved drywallers and baby-sitters than it does brothel prisoners.

These cases could be the tip of an iceberg. Or they could be rare. No one knows. Even the State Department's revised 20,000 figure remains "very suspect" as being too high, says David Feingold, an anthropologist who's in charge of anti-trafficking projects for UNESCO. Estimates aside, very few people in this country are coming to the authorities to complain they've been trafficked. The dearth is reflected in figures for the T visa, the one Alice B. got that allowed her to stay in the country after she ran away from her nanny job in Palo Alto. Each year since 2001, the government has set aside 5,000 of these for trafficking victims. Thus, the authorities by now could have counted more than 20,000 victims. Yet according to the Department of Homeland Security's Citizen and Immigration Services Division, only 1,084 people have filed for T visas. Most applicants reported being forced into labor such as construction, welding and domestic work. These figures suggest that the nation harbors more enslaved drywallers and baby-sitters than it does brothel prisoners.

Still, the media favor sex-trafficking stories over accounts of other forced work. Television and the press are full of titillating reports, often with suggestive visuals (a *New York Times Magazine* cover piece featured a photo of a teenaged victim posed in a Catholic-style schoolgirl uniform—sitting on a bed). Despite the likelihood that the coverage is skewed, researchers such as Kevin Bales, of the NGO Free the Slaves, have tallied press clippings to argue that prostitution predominates over other types of labor trafficking. The State Department makes the same claim by citing the Bales study. The International Labor Organization used similarly shaky methodology to arrive at its claim, published earlier this year, that most immigrants trafficked to industrialized countries are brought for sex work.

But that's not what people who work with forced labor victims are finding. "Only one-third of my cases are about sex trafficking," says Suzanne Tomatore, an attorney who heads the Immigrant Women and Children Project of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York. Tomatore says that the "vast majority" of her clients were trafficked into domestic work, including immigrants brought to work for UN and consular officials. The typical employee "gets paid $50 a month or not at all. They're working seventeen, eighteen hours a day, catering parties, washing laundry by hand even though there's a washing machine. They've had their documents withheld and their phone calls monitored." It's the same story in the Washington, DC, area, according to Layli Miller-Muro, director of the suburban Virginia–based women's human rights group the Tahirih Justice Center—except that many traffickers there are World Bank employees.

In Los Angeles, the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST) also deals mainly with victims who've had nothing to do with prostitution. "Besides bondage in households, we're seeing an increase in people of both sexes trafficked into restaurants and construction," says CAST director Kay Buck. "And factories—often victims are forced not just to work but to sleep in them."

Though the NGOs refer many of these people to the Feds, they seem to get a lot less government PR than do victims who can be portrayed as sex slaves. The Department of Justice publishes a newsletter with colorful bar graphs illustrating its prosecution statistics. The blue bars, for "Sex Trafficking," are much higher than the red ones, for "Labor Trafficking"—implying that the vast majority of DOJ cases under the TVPA are about prostitution. The DOJ won't release comprehensive narratives of each case, but details scattered in departmental press releases and newsletters reveal that many involve women and girls trapped in domestic or restaurant work who were molested or raped by a male employer or by men in his family. The main work these victims did was as cooks, waitresses and housekeepers. The sexual assaults did not involve money. Still, the government apparently is classifying these scenarios as sex trafficking.

Service providers stress that coerced sex brutalizes victims, and they're glad the government and the media are concerned. But they wonder why other workers' suffering gets so much less attention. The terror evoked by imprisonment in a sweatshop, says CAST's Buck, "is just as severe as it is for a person who's sex trafficked." What's more, most people who've been trafficked are in the country without immigration papers. Indeed, they went into bondage to begin with because enforcement of this country's borders is getting more and more strict. Tightening borders ups the price of being smuggled, according to UN researcher Susan Forbes Martin. Smugglers often import their clients on credit, selling the debt to restaurant, sweatshop and brothel owners; debtor immigrants then work off the money they owe. Even when voluntary, this debt-bondage arrangement is illegal, like just about everything else in undocumented immigrants' lives. They're so used to being underground that "they're more terrified of the government than of traffickers," says attorney Juhu Thukral, director of the New York City–

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based Sex Workers Project of the Urban Justice Institute.

As part of its work with prostitutes, the Sex Workers Project assists trafficking victims. But "when we say, 'You have to sit down with FBI agents,'" Thukral says, "suddenly the trafficking situation they escaped from doesn't seem so bad." Or at least not bad enough to apply for TVPA assistance—even when the forced labor involves prostitution. Immigrants "may say, 'What do I need a green card for? I can get a job in a restaurant without it. I just want to make some money for my family, then go home.'" Three out of four of Thukral's clients refuse to talk to the government. Other service providers cite similar ratios. Trafficking victims who do cooperate can get a T visa even if the government decides it's too much trouble to prosecute their case (this is what happened to Alice B.).

But cooperation is often a carrot-and-stick deal: In return for visas, victims help curtail other people's ability to immigrate without papers. Mie Lewis, an attorney who worked until recently with the Bay Area Anti-Trafficking Task Force, recalls that her clients who met with prosecutors "would be grilled about the circumstances of their entry into this country." Immigration agents "used them as sources of information about holes in the border, asking, 'Where, exactly, did you cross out of Canada? Where did you get your [fake] documents?'" As University of Southern Maine sociologist and women's studies professor Wendy Chapkis says, the TVPA "serves as a soft glove covering a still punishing fist" of US immigration policy.

The law contains yet another stick. Under the TVPA the US government can yank nonhumanitarian foreign aid from nations that, in its estimation, aren't hard enough on trafficking. Currently twelve countries are on this list, including Cuba, North Korea and Venezuela. Meanwhile, the State Department does not evaluate the United States' anti-trafficking work—though the Justice Department prosecuted only thirty-two trafficking cases from the time the TVPA was instituted until late last year.

And "sex trafficking" has created another foreign and domestic policy knout. The government has lately begun to argue that legal sex work causes sex trafficking. It backs up this claim with dubious data—including from Rhode Island University women's studies professor Donna Hughes, an outspoken advocate of morally conservative policies on trafficking who is getting research money from the State Department. Thus, a revision last year to the TVPA (and an additional law enacted this year for groups working to prevent AIDS—see Esther Kaplan, "Just Say *Não*," May 30), allows the government to refuse money to NGOs that "promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution." The result: Groups that combat trafficking and HIV infection by helping organize prostitutes, groups that believe prostitution should be decriminalized, groups with no position one way or another on legalization—all now risk losing resources unless they put in writing that prostitution should be outlawed. The Tahirih Justice Center is one victim of the loyalty oath. "We applied last year for money from the State Department to do training on trafficking issues in India," says director Miller-Muro. "We were told, 'You don't have a policy on prostitution.' My understanding is, that's one reason we didn't get the funding."

NGOs are afraid of Bush Administration blacklisting, says Ann Jordan, director of the Initiative Against Trafficking in Persons (IATP) at the Washington, DC–based International Human Rights Law Group. "A new round of funding is coming up," Jordan says. "People feel very intimidated about talking about legalizing prostitution."

Not only is critical discussion about an important feminist issue being chilled. The "sex slave" panic is also silencing critical discussion about the law-and-order fetish for border control in the age of transnationalized labor. "When are we ever going to have a conversation in this country about the fact that we're holding millions of people hostage to immigration policy?" asks Jordan. "Anti-trafficking activists need to hook up with immigration-rights organizing. And with labor organizing, too." ■

LETTERS
CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

coming book, but nevertheless he's sure the dozens of people who reviewed it for the press are wrong. But even if he's right about that, seeking to stop its publication is a violation of the author's freedom of speech and a challenge to the academic freedom of the University of California. The appropriate response to speech that is wrong is not to silence it but to argue against it—because nobody has a monopoly on the truth, not even Alan Dershowitz.

But all this is not really about Alan Dershowitz. It's about Israel. Norman Finkelstein's book, *Beyond Chutzpah*, which I've read in galley form, is harshly critical of Dershowitz's book *The Case for Israel*, taking on his defense of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Finkelstein challenges Dershowitz by citing mainstream groups like Amnesty International, the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem and Human Rights Watch. The book is a series of juxtapositions—arguments by Dershowitz on Israeli practices of torture, assassinations, treatment of Palestinian children and water and land rights, followed by refutations from human rights organizations. The cumulative effect is a devastating portrait of widespread Israeli violations of human rights principles and international law.

Dershowitz leaves it to his student research assistants to respond to charges of academic dishonesty. Finkelstein argues that Dershowitz lifted twenty footnotes in his book *The Case for Israel* from another book (Joan Peters's *From Time Immemorial*) without indicating that's where he found them. According to the definition of plagiarism at Harvard, where Dershowitz teaches, plagiarism is not just quoting someone without attribution—it is "passing off a source's information, ideas, or words as your own by omitting to cite them."

My article quoted Dershowitz's instructions to Holly Beth Billington: "Holly Beth: cite sources on pp. 160, 485, 486 fns 141-145." He was referring to footnotes in Joan Peters's book—thus claiming Peters's research as his own work. That would make him guilty of academic dishonesty. When I asked Dershowitz about this, he said, "I went to the Harvard library," found and read the original sources—which made it OK, he said, not to run a footnote that included the phrase "cited in Peters." Now Billington et al. say *they* are the ones who went to the library—not Dershowitz himself. If they are right, that makes his statement to me untrue.

Billington et al. say I should have asked them about this. But I don't need to interview Holly Beth to find out what "cite" means; that's in the dictionary—and it's different from "go to the library and check." JON WIENER

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

The Unexamined Life

LEE SIEGEL

OH THE GLORY OF IT ALL.
By Sean Wilsey.
Penguin Press. 482 pp. $25.95.

By 2052, according to a recent study, more books will be published in a year than readers will exist to buy and enjoy them. That's taking into account books published by print-on-demand companies—digital printing that produces a bound volume in minutes. Experience bears that out. Among people I don't think of as novelists, nonfiction writers or memoirists, very few of them are not busily writing novels, nonfiction books or memoirs. One of the open secrets of literary life is that it's easier to get a book deal for a first novel, or for a work of nonfiction, than it is to get a short story or an article published in a serious magazine. This is because book publishing now revolves less around the book itself than around the marketability of the author—physical appearance; ethnicity, race, religion or sexuality; media or social connections—while serious magazine publishing, for all of its shortcomings, is still about writing. To a large degree, writing a book has become just another form of producing and selling, another project of the entrepreneurial or egotistical American self. That makes most books being published social, not cultural, events. They are the type of calculating, transactional social occasions that authentic cultural events sublimate into clarifying expression. These simulated books should be reported and investigated in the national news sections of newspapers, not reviewed in their culture pages. But American literary criticism, in its blindness to the advent of the simulated book—namely, to the broad context that produces these new modes of expedience—is about twenty years behind American publishing.

And for good reason. To take one recent example, how do you critically approach *Oh the Glory of It All*, a "book" that is, for one thing, less a book than a very long e-mail? E-mail's conversion of casual conversation into writing—you chat with your fingers rather than try to organize your thoughts into words—is slowly phasing out writing as a formal mode of reflection, to the point that soon we won't expect writing to have irony or different levels of meaning any more than we expect casual conversation to have a meticulously crafted structure. The discipline of arduously thinking your way into words has given way to the indulgence of going on, and on, and on as a substitute for thinking. When Edmund Wilson said that the typewriter had changed American writing, he didn't know the half of it.

What does a critic do with Sean Wilsey's vulnerable, aching, unresolved memoir of growing up rich, empty and unloved amid San Francisco's high society, an account that is more like a spontaneous, unedited private unburdening than a real book meant to be read by other people? Wilsey's father was a wealthy businessman and philanthropist who left Wilsey's mother—

Anyone can write a book today, and just about everyone does: Book publishing is just another project of the entrepreneurial self.

a socialite and society columnist—for her best friend, also a glittering hostess, and a very rich woman herself. Wilsey, currently an editor of the literary magazine *McSweeney's*, writes his memoir in a tone of self-deprecating sincerity that verges on irony but self-consciously resists it; he details his wayward youth, his problems adjusting to his shifting family circumstances and to various social situations, concluding with what he calls his "redemption" at a special school for troubled kids in Italy. Yet the sweet, hapless, beleaguered manner hides a simmering passive-aggressive anger, through whose hidden injuries emerge portraits of Wilsey's father as a narcissistic philanderer, his mother as a narcissistic fantasist with something like a Gandhi complex and his stepmother as a cross between Joan Crawford and Lizzie Borden. Yet the sweetly self-presenting author seems

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unaware of his passive-aggressive poison—the reader apprehends the toxic vapors behind Wilsey's back, as it were. *Oh the Glory of It All* seems to have been written by an unreflective person, which is the literary equivalent of being a color-blind painter.

Wilsey does acknowledge his book's undigested quality, unaware that in doing so he's confirming the very charge of being unliterarily wrapped up in himself that he's trying to deflect: "A memoir, at its heart, is written in order to figure out who you are." In fact, a memoir written so that the memoirist can figure himself out is not meant to be read by anyone besides the author, with the exception of people who either love him or have a professional obligation to help him. If you do happen to pick up such a book, you will be eavesdropping, not reading; you will be in the odd position of having to make sense of experiences that the author hasn't made sense of for himself. If you happen to dislike such a book, you will be in the uncomfortable position of passing judgment on the writer, rather than on his creation. You will be delivering an insult, not making a criticism. Who wants to do that?

The product of a person venting rather than of a writer writing, Wilsey's memoir is not so much a book as a long e-mail.

Somewhere in the middle of his memoir, Wilsey offers this characteristically vague description of his boyhood friend Spencer's family, with whom Sean spends a lot of time when he's in his early teens:

> Mr. Perry was forbearing and rarely seen. Mrs. Perry was sick with cancer, bedridden, and sweetly crazy. Spencer's little brother, Scott, had fought off his own bout of cancer with chemo and gone bald when he was eight. It had made him the type of self-possessed kid you just did not worry about ever. Probably because it hurt too much to worry about him.

Now, why is Mrs. Perry "sick with cancer" and "sweetly crazy"? Is she the latter because of the former? If not, how can she be sweetly crazy independent of being so ill with cancer that she cannot leave her bed? If she is sweetly crazy—typically, Wilsey tells us that she is, but doesn't show how she is—it must have something to do with her condition, to the extent that it makes no sense to describe her eccentricity as if it had nothing to do with her condition.

And did Scott's "bout" with cancer and his loss of hair really make him "self-possessed"? Who is this "you" who never worried about Scott? It can't be anyone in his family, who all must be terrified that at any moment in the future of this very young boy, the cancer will begin again, and terrified also that with mother and son both sick with cancer, everyone else in the family is genetically vulnerable to the disease. The bit about it hurting "too much to worry about" would seem like a conscientious corrective to the previous sentence if it weren't so patently insincere: You still don't know who's doing or not doing the worrying. Anyway, if you have a son or brother who nearly died of cancer, you can't help but worry about him, whether worrying "hurts" or not.

You have to keep reminding yourself that Wilsey is a person venting rather than a writer writing, and that *Oh the Glory of It All* is a prolonged private outpouring rather than a book. If you don't remember this, you'll end up putting the book aside upon reaching the second page, where Wilsey relates that his superrich father pleased his gold-digging mother because "he helped her want things she did not know to want." But was there anything worth having that Wilsey's mother, portrayed by him as a calculating social climber who married his father for his money, "did not know to want"? You feel the urge to protest that a serious book should have the basics of psychological insight, especially about the author's own life. Instead, you have to be patient because, like an unreflective person and not like a writer, Wilsey is in the process of finding out who he is. He is writing a memoir without self-understanding, as well as without insight into other people.

Reviewers of Wilsey's book have noted that his portrayals of his parents and stepmother are crude, one-dimensional and cartoonlike. Wilsey doesn't seem to care about making sense of them as complicated, interesting people: "But how can I explain Dede? She's my evil stepmother. She's an unbelievable cliché." However, people are not clichés, and declaring that they are doesn't make it so. I don't want to be unkind to Sean Wilsey. Nobody does. That's the critic's problem with simulated books, in a nutshell. At one point, Wilsey tells us that his similarly superprivileged stepbrothers "liked the Police. I had not heard of the Police. My favorite song was the theme song from the Royal Viking Star cruise liner." This is charming and funny—one of the book's few comical moments—but Wilsey is being sincere. He often seems to be writing with an open heart, and out of an open wound. If only a fraction of the stories he relates are true—he tells us that Dede routinely berated him for being a "faggot" when he was a boy—you will want to give him a hug.

This seeming vulnerability is perhaps why the reviewers who complained about Wilsey's one-dimensional portraits nevertheless pronounced *Oh the Glory of It All* a formidable literary work. These critics are taking Wilsey personally because he presents himself personally. And on the surface, much like reality television, there doesn't seem to be anything artful or "written" about Wilsey's seemingly frank, natural, spontaneously produced book at all:

> Todd [Wilsey's stepbrother] had a picture of Dede in her debutante days up on the wall in his nongray room. She was beautiful in this photo; but, more importantly, she looked doable. This was a whack-off pic if there ever was one! She was showing a lot of cleavage, and she looked liked she *wanted it*. I always thought, *Dude, why do you have a whack-off pic of your mom up on the wall above your bed?* And then I'd get turned on from standing there looking at it and run upstairs to whack off.

For all its naturalness, there is something jarring about that passage. It's not just that a 35-year-old man is squandering the opportunity to publicly evoke his past by expressing himself in such a puerile way. The breezy, colloquial tone is, after all, the book's trust-me, nonartificial quality. What jolts you is that Wilsey graphically describes his physical attraction to Dede throughout the book because he seems to think—or he's been told—that this revelation has the capacity to shock. Yet it is neither unusual nor abnormal for a 14-year-old boy to be sexually drawn to his stepmother in some confused way. What's surprising, if not shocking, is that Wilsey never tries to "figure out" what it means for him to be sexually aroused by an emotionally abusive stepmother; he never tries to identify the quality in his character that might have given rise to such an impulse. There is something phony about authentically recounting experiences that you don't even take the trouble to understand.

And so the more you read, the more you wonder about the authenticity of Wilsey's apparent candor. For one thing, Wilsey re-creates precise dialogue—quotation marks and all—that he claims to

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have heard as a very young boy, not to mention precise descriptions of what he says he was feeling at exact moments at the time. This is an excerpt from an extended dinner-table conversation at his parents' house before they're divorced that he claims to have overheard. He was 4:

> MOM: How do you feel you have changed?
>
> MAN'S VOICE: I was a Marxist. I had rejected spiritual values. But then... I saw the design in nature and I was convinced there was a Creator.... It was a bad time for me. I wanted to go home to the United States. Friends of mine got into power and I thought they would help me but they didn't.

This miraculously recollected conversation goes on for several hundred words. A year later, at the age of 5, Wilsey recalls a moment with his future stepmother:

> "Come with me, Sean," she said. "I've got a surprise for you."
>
> I wondered how she had gotten into our house. But it didn't matter. She was Mom's best friend. I went downstairs, got in her car, and we drove to the supermarket. She took me to the candy aisle.
>
> "Let's pretend it's Halloween," Dede said. "And we can have as much candy as we want."
>
> I was tentative.

He remembers that at a precise moment, when he was 5 years old, he was tentative. I didn't know that 5-year-olds could even *be* tentative. (I thought they just had trouble making up their minds.)

Here is the 12-year-old Sean in Moscow in the early 1980s, as part of a group of children transported around the world by his mother, who through her social connections had turned herself into a highly visible advocate of world peace and nuclear disarmament. Sean is standing in the office of a Soviet official named Ruben, who is speaking informally to Wilsey's group:

> Ruben was talking about the Soviet Union's many allies.... He said, "I'd like to reemphasize that all of those people regardless of their faith or race or color or nationality are absolutely equal in their rights. And I am not merely talking of...equality of peoples in the Soviet Union. For it is a genuine and true equality in everything and every sphere of life."

Strangely, not a single reviewer has wondered about Wilsey's superhuman powers of recall. Critics could at least have used the occasion to reflect on the question of truth in memoir. This is not, after all, *Speak, Memory* or *The Words*, memoirs in which poetic imaginations create their own truth, mere facts be damned. *Oh the Glory of It All* doesn't ask to be read on poetic terms, so isn't it fair to ask if the facts are accurate?

Although Wilsey blames his parents for his shortcomings—"they destroyed my childhood"—and refuses to accept that their complicated, messy lives are the inevitable lot of being an adult—"there was something childlike about Mom and Dad"—it's hard to resist feeling that he's displaying the same sense of entitlement and lofty indifference to reality that he claims characterized their treatment of him. Such is Wilsey's self-absorption that he doesn't tell us he has two full brothers and two half-sisters until the memoir's final pages, and then says nothing about his relationship to them. This makes it especially hard to credit his avowal that he and his siblings calmly accepted Dede's announcement that she had cut them out of their share of their father's fortune. (Wilsey insists that he would have given the money to charity.) No litigation on the part of any of the siblings? Even for the sake of charity? Call me cynical, but I just don't believe it. Yet all the other reviewers apparently did, because no one bothered to question Wilsey's Prince Myshkin–like account of his and his siblings' reaction to the news. Were the critics afraid that raising the subject of money in a review of a book about superwealthy people would somehow be considered... ill-bred? The country has become so money- and status-obsessed that talking about money and status has become almost taboo.

Wilsey says two things that betray both his self-deception and his peculiar re-enactment of what he has presented as his parents' coarseness and materialism. The first occurs in a description of his mother's alluring physical appearance: "Beauty is like money from God." The second is about his father's "social prominence to which I owe my existence." Holden Caulfield, where art thou?!! Beauty may be the apple of money's eye, but it is nothing like money. It is the one quality on which money has no purchase; that is why money so hotly pursues all things beautiful. As the young Wilsey might have said: Duh! And if Wilsey wrote this book in order to better "figure out" who he is and concludes, without so much as the slightest irony, that he owes his very existence—not his status and opportunities in

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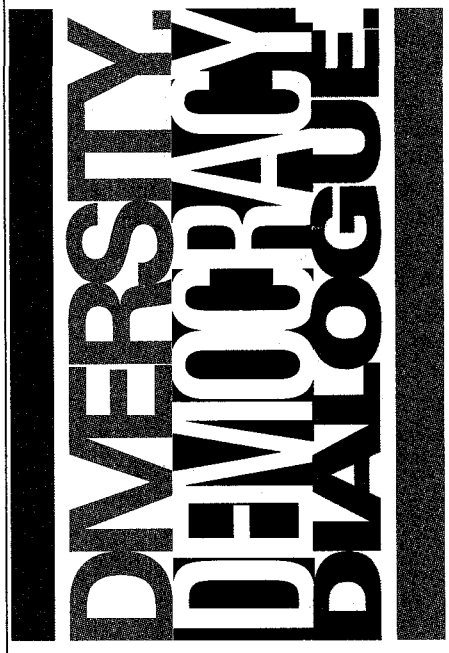

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the world, but his existence—to his father's social prominence, he is a long way from self-knowledge. Especially given that his entire memoir is devoted to showing his father's uncaring, unloving, soul-deforming effect on him.

But, then, nonrich people keep getting reminded by reality that the stories they tell themselves aren't true. The rich have a better shot at making up narratives that they can believe in unencumbered by the facts. At least, that's the type of denial Wilsey says his wealthy parents are swaddled in. As for Wilsey himself, he tells us in a concluding chapter titled "Redemption" that the special school for troubled rich kids in Italy transformed him from "a wounded sarcastic wiseass, a self-serving liar, and a sneak" into "A Beautiful Man of Honesty and Integrity." Later, he says,

> Kids are trusting and wise and I cannot think of a less useful combination to be born with. The wisdom lets children know who they are. And then the trust lets everyone else take that knowledge away.

He follows that breathtaking fantasy about life some pages further on, right at the end of the book, with this beautiful hallucination about his parents' and stepmother's influence: "If the three of them hadn't been so consistently themselves, it might have turned out otherwise." The neat happy ending of a redemptive transformation: wise, trusting children and cruel betraying adults, people who are knowable, predictable, "consistently themselves," just like comic book figures—forgive my own coarse materialism, but you need a lot of money to sustain these illusions about life into nearly middle age. Only in the current overheated publishing climate could someone offer a memoir so devoid of self-understanding, a tale that presents wealth and privilege as an affliction—wealth as the new poverty; privilege as the new disadvantage—and soars onto the bestseller list with the blessings of respected critics.

And there is something eerily familiar about all of this. A rich kid who owes his existence to his rich, influential daddy; who blames everyone but himself for his mistakes; who charms everyone into forgetting his flaws by winkingly acknowledging his flaws; who has fabricated and follows a fantasy-narrative about his life; who appears to promulgate naked deceits and self-deceits that, astonishingly, seem to strengthen his credibility. Wilsey for president! No, I'm not comparing the injured (but isn't everyone?) San Francisco heir to the injuring Washington scion. But if we really want to step outside the status quo and get to the bottom of what's happening in this country, maybe we should start paying attention to the culture in a different way. We might want to start thinking about our nominally liberal culture-makers and culture-appraisers—and just about everyone in the arts is "liberal"...aren't they?—with the same skepticism and scrutiny that we apply to politics. Everything really is connected, in one way or another. ■

The Twilight Zone

J. HOBERMAN

SHADOWS OF BERLIN. By Dovid Bergelson. Edited and translated by Joachim Neugroschel. City Lights. 116 pp. $14.95.

Yiddish literature can be seen as a three-legged stool: hard, homey and supported by its three "grandfathers." There is the corrosive anticlerical satirist who called himself Mendele Mokher Sforim (Mendele the Book Seller); the self-invented, deceptively artless and universally beloved folk author Sholem Aleichem; and the Warsaw writer of Hasidic allegories I.L. Peretz. But there was once a fourth, or rather the promise of a fourth: Dovid Bergelson (1884–1952).

Unlike the grandfathers, Bergelson did not write for a popular audience so much as a cultivated Yiddish-speaking elite—at least at first. And, no less than his readers, Bergelson was a complex amalgam of the provincial and the cosmopolitan. Born to a prosperous Hasidic family in a Ukrainian shtetl, he attended a traditional religious school but received a secular European education from a tutor. His parents died when he was a boy. From the age of 14 he was raised in the households of elder brothers who had left their small town for the booming, increasingly Jewish cities of Kiev, Odessa and Warsaw.

Bergelson emerged as an artist in the aftermath of the failed 1905 revolution in Russia, and although his early work is not overtly political, it is characterized by a crepuscular melancholy. Like more than one Jewish author of his generation, he wrote first in Hebrew and Russian before switching to Yiddish, his native tongue, to address the twilight of the Yiddish world. Readers accustomed to Sholem Aleichem's sturdy village archetypes or Isaac Bashevis Singer's studied supernaturalism may be surprised by Bergelson's decomposing milieu. His setting was the shtetl, well into its decline by the early twentieth century; his characters are largely secular, frustrated young people who struggle with their sense of futility and dream of escape.

Yiddish literature has naturally had a strong Russian component. Sholem Aleichem learned from Gogol. Jacob Gordin, the first serious Yiddish dramatist, was devoted to Tolstoy. Bergelson, for his part, studied Chekhov. He was the first Yiddish author concerned with individual psychology, and his impressionist prose was no less modern. An exacting and self-conscious stylist, Bergelson was a poet of subtle emotional atmospheres and a master of musical repetitions. Although his moods range from wistful to hopeless, he anticipates Saul Bellow in his irony, his predilection for ineffectual intellectuals and his fondness for Talmud-schooled internal dialogues.

Published in 1909, "At the Depot"—which concerns the business and other failures of an overeducated and "superfluous" young man—was instantly acclaimed by Yiddish critics. The 1913 novella *Departing* is the tale of a young man's suicide, and of its ripple effect on the shtetl. Bergelson's masterpiece, *Nokh Alemen*, a novel featuring a doomed, dreamy young woman as its antiheroine, was published on the eve of World War I. It was translated in 1977 as *When All Is Said and Done*, but its title might just as well be rendered as *The End of Everything*.

Like one of his characters, Bergelson succumbed to depression and wrote little during the war; in 1917, however, he became something of an organizer, founding the Yiddish Culture League in Kiev to encourage Modernist Yiddish literature and avant-garde Jewish art. In the spring of 1921, he joined the émigré exodus to Berlin—which included the cream of Russia's Yiddish

J. Hoberman, senior film critic for the Village Voice, *is the author, most recently, of* The Dream Life: Movies, Media, and the Mythology of the Sixties *(New Press).*

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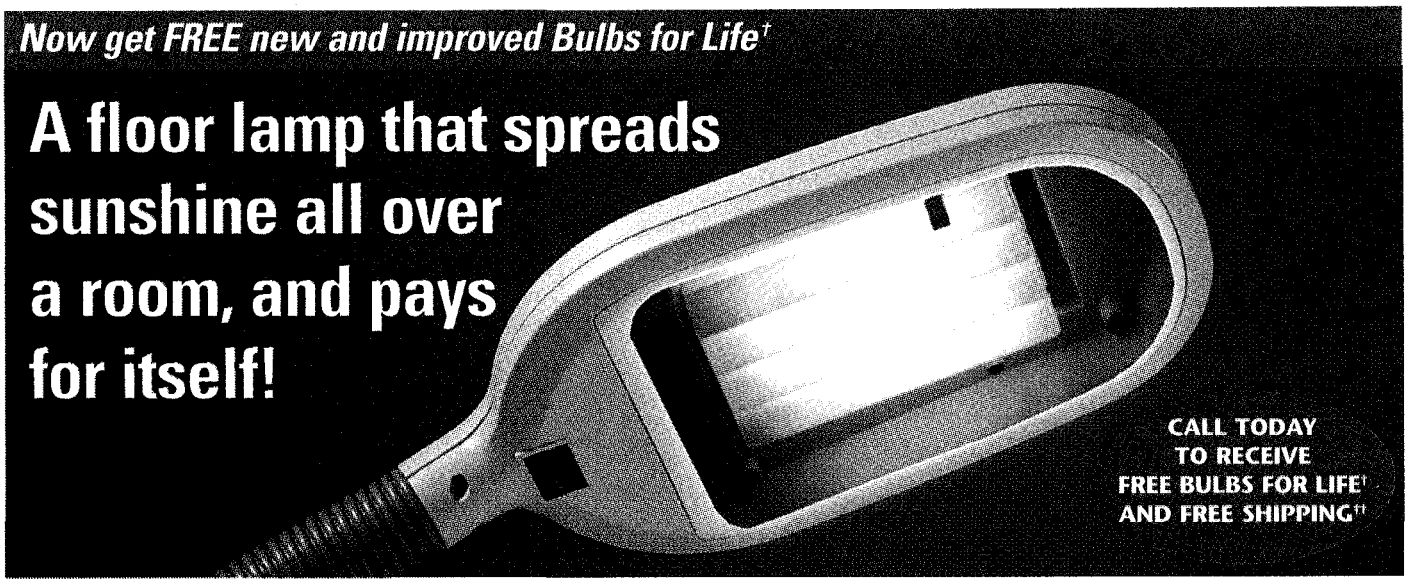

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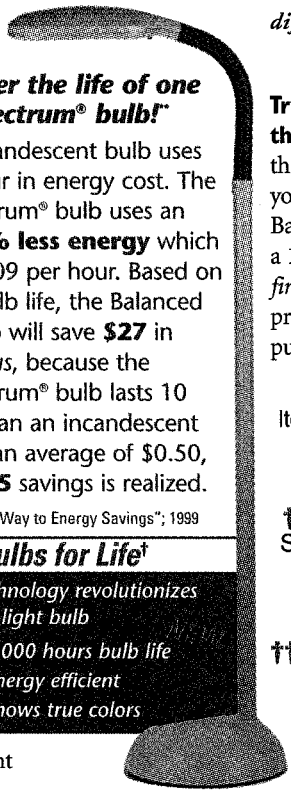

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writers, among them Peretz Markish, Der Nister and Leib Kvitko. Although the city was Bergelson's base for a dozen years, he traveled widely, sometimes for months at a time, in Denmark, Romania, the Soviet Union, the United States and Poland.

Everywhere he went, Bergelson wrote and edited, publishing stories and filing dispatches in the Yiddish press. He was likely the best-known (and certainly the best-paid) Russian Yiddish writer of the 1920s, which partly accounts for the enormous stir he caused among the Yiddish intelligentsia with his 1926 pro-Soviet essay "Three Centers." Bergelson had recently revisited his homeland and was deeply impressed by the official status and state subsidies that Yiddish now enjoyed. It was not the United States, where, he believed, Jews were crassly assimilating, or Poland, where Jews remained mired in underdevelopment, but the Soviet Union that offered the best prospects for Yiddish literature. Bergelson's political allegiances switched accordingly. He broke with New York's *Daily Forward* and became a correspondent for the Communist Yiddish press in both Moscow and New York.

Once "in harness"—as he named his new journal—Bergelson experimented with overtly political (and politically correct) subjects. Set during the Russian Civil War, his 1925 novel *Divine Justice* has a heroic Soviet security officer as its protagonist. *At the Dnieper*, published in 1932 as the first installment of a never-finished trilogy, was even more Socialist Realist in its quasi-autobiographical account of a Jewish boy's political education.

Bergelson returned home in 1933, the same year the Nazis came to power in Germany and the Soviet Union released its lone Yiddish-language talking picture—the story of a Russian Jewish worker who leaves America to build socialism in Magnitogorsk, directed from a screenplay by his friendly rival Markish. Soon after, Bergelson toured the new Jewish "autonomous region" of Birobidzhan in southeast Russia and published a wildly enthusiastic book about his trip. "The snow has ceased to fall and the wind has died down," he wrote. "And the sun.... The sun, above you, below you, on the hillocks and in the sky, so bright—could it possibly be any brighter?"

At 50 Bergelson became a true believer. He sought a Russian readership and was perturbed to be passed over for the honors bestowed on other Yiddish writers—Markish was awarded a Lenin Prize in 1939! Bergelson participated in the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee during World War II, and his work took a turn that would later be deemed "nationalist." He was arrested in January 1949, along with 143 other Jewish writers, as part of Stalin's postwar "anti-cosmopolitan" campaign, most of whose victims were Jews. A month later, Yiddish literature itself was effectively banned. On August 12, 1952, after a secret trial, Bergelson was shot.

Although Bergelson left a substantial *oeuvre*, only his prerevolutionary work has appeared in English, with the exception of *The Jewish Autonomous Region*, a pamphlet put out by Moscow's Foreign Languages Publishing House, in which Bergelson enumerates the accomplishments of Jews under the Soviets and extols the beneficial effects of this Far Eastern settlement. *Shadows of Berlin*, a slender collection of stories edited and translated by Joachim Neugroschel, extends the writer's English-language career into the 1920s.

Bergelson lived in Germany during the period of hyperinflation and failed revolutions, naked cabarets and marching Brownshirts.

In a sense, Neugroschel (a distinguished translator who has included Bergelson stories in several previous anthologies) invents a new writer—Bergelson the Berliner. While in the German capital, Bergelson wrote mainly of the Russian Civil War's impact on the shtetl or, alternately, on the relocation of Jewish families to the newly Sovietized cities. The three collections he published during this period include only seven stories actually set in Berlin. Neugroschel has gathered these, adding the unanthologized *feuilleton* "For 12,000 Bucks He Fasts Forty Days: Scenes of Berlin," one of the last pieces that Bergelson would publish in the *Forward*.

Bergelson lived in Germany during the period of hyperinflation and failed revolution, naked cabarets and marching Brownshirts, the prelude to Hitler's seizure of power. But the writer was more focused on the apocalypse that had already happened than on any impending disaster; the stories in *Shadows of Berlin* revolve almost exclusively around those dislocated and disoriented Jews who flooded the city's east end in the early 1920s. "Sisters," in which an unmarried medical student intervenes in her younger sibling's romantic fantasies, and the lesser "Blindness," about an unhappy wife who initiates a relationship with a sightless veteran she meets in a park, are psychological studies reminiscent of, if less nuanced than, prerevolutionary Bergelson. The strongest stories are dense and allusive evocations of Jewish time travel, conjoining metropolitan realities with memories of the shtetl and biblical scenarios.

"The Boarding House of the Three Sisters" describes an ironic idyll ("Mohamed's paradise!") populated by fantasy-prone Jewish émigrés and presided over by three beautiful *houris*—one of whom plays the piano to produce "fading heartache notes as if from the Jewish prayer for the dead." The protagonist of "Old Age" is an old and pious Jew, newly arrived from "a little Ukrainian ghost town" where he had been held in high regard—that is, before the Great Wind swept the old life away. His children have installed him in their Berlin apartment. There he sits and studies, and Bergelson likens his humming to a trapped bee banging against a double window.

For the old man, Berlin—which he experiences only as the sound of people in the street—is Nineveh, the city God wished to destroy and to which he dispatched his unwilling prophet Jonah. Thinking of this, the old man remembers his own terrible sin (described by Bergelson with elliptical precision): "At that very moment, the war had broken out...." The woman whom he had wronged "vanished, as if swallowed up by the sea," and, in allowing himself to be brought to this Nineveh, he realizes that he has fled from God, just like Jonah.

"For 12,000 Bucks He Fasts Forty Days" extends this sense of guilt. In his too scanty introduction, Neugroschel suggests that Bergelson's story is a riff on Kafka's "The Hunger Artist," first published in Berlin in 1922. Maybe so, but it may also be a response to those living skeletons who, sitting in glass cases, fasted for the entertainment of diners at fashionable Berlin restaurants. Where Kafka was writing about himself, Bergelson used this grotesque spectacle to satirize the ascetic tradition within rabbinic Judaism and thus to question the purpose of Jewish suffering. "These fasts have brought no new Torah from Mount Sinai, nor have they prevented the destruction of Europe's 'Temple,'" he writes—unless, of course, as the shtetl skeptic the narrator remembers from his childhood always maintained, the fasts themselves were a fraud.

Bergelson also ponders Jewish pain as experienced in the savage pogroms of the Russian Civil War. In the caustic "Two Murderers," Zarembo—an émigré Cossack whose gang plundered and murdered

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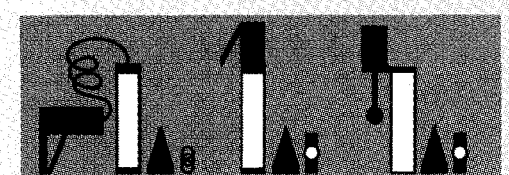

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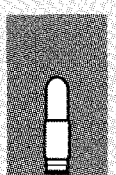

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Jews throughout Ukraine—winds up boarding with a widow whose beloved pet is the most infamous dog in Berlin, having ripped out the throat of an 8-month-old infant. Tenant and landlady barely understand each other, but as her "curious rattling in German" reminds him of the Jewish women in the shtetls he pillaged, so the story of her killer dog awakens memories of the massacres. Misunderstanding his crude German, the landlady imagines Zarembo is telling a story like hers. She forgives him, as she has her dog.

Even more unsettling is "Among Refugees," written in 1923 and anthologized, along with a number of Civil War tales, in Bergelson's 1928 *Storm Days*. A young Jew with a crooked left cheek and eyes that burn like memorial candles shows up on the writer's doorstep, introducing himself as "a Jewish terrorist." He has arrived in Berlin, by way of Palestine, from a pogrom-devastated shtetl and found himself sharing a rooming house with a Zarembo-like pogromist whom he has decided to kill.

"Among Refugees," Neugroschel points out, anticipates the actions of Sholem Shwartsbard, the Jewish assassin who shot Szymon Petlura, exiled president of the independent Ukraine, on a Paris street in 1926. But Bergelson's slant is not political. Most of the story is given over to the would-be terrorist's convoluted memories and dis-associated consciousness: "It wasn't I who had those thoughts, it was someone else." Rejected by his fellow refugees—instead of giving him a gun, they arrange for him to meet a psychiatrist (with unfortunate results)—this tormented refugee among refugees decides to make his case to a writer. Writers, he explains, "present their nation to the world."

Did Bergelson view his work in these terms? Or was it his mission to present the world to his nation? Which was where? The grandfathers addressed an audience that was inexorably losing its grandchildren. A writer appears only once more in Bergelson's Berlin stories. "One Night Less," strategically placed last by Neugroschel, recounts an unrecognized poet's lurching nocturnal excursion through the hallucinatory streets of the German capital. This is the story in which Berlin has the most presence—and, no less significantly, the impoverished young poet is only a poet.

Disheveled, grandiose Max Wentzl does not seem to be a refugee, nor is he identified as a Jew. He has no family and only one friend, a painter as obscure as he. He is too poor to afford a prostitute, but he is not a communist. He is simply a writer, albeit one with Bergelson's voice. He has no readers, but a critic (now dead) told him that his poems were great, adding—as if to fool history's evil eye—"I'm afraid to say 'brilliant.'" ■

After Hours

TERRY EAGLETON

AT DAY'S CLOSE: Night in Times Past.
By A. Roger Ekirch. Norton. 447 pp. $25.95.

Writing about nighttime seems an oddly Beckettian sort of enterprise, exploring a world in which nothing much seems to happen. Yet night, as A. Roger Ekirch demonstrates in this absorbing study, is by no means a realm for insomniacs and international telephone operators alone. For our early-modern ancestors, the darkness that descends on us each evening, far from being vacant and void, was dense, tangible stuff that literally fell from the sky. It was a thick soup of noisome fumes, dark contagions and pestilential blasts. Darkness was thronged with demonic powers and abducting elves, a medium that cruelly deprived people of their senses in a small-scale world where personal interaction was vital. Families needed to keep their possessions carefully in place so that they might find them in the dark, though the nocturnal sight of pre-industrial people was probably enhanced by their fruit-and-vegetable diet.

Smells, of which premodern Europe had more than enough, could help steer you to your destination. Dunghills and bakeries could act as signposts. Moonlight was a cherished commodity, and journeys were scheduled in accordance with it. Even so, darkness regularly caused our predecessors to topple into fireplaces, disappear drunkenly down potholes or be savaged by wolves and footpads. If you were particularly unlucky, you might find yourself showered by the urine and excrement that were ritually tipped into the street at night from high windows (though in the more civilized cities, it was customary to shout a warning).

Crime, then as now, posed a particular problem. Nightfall was the cue for thieves, smugglers and sheep stealers to get to work. Marauding bands of young bloods roamed about smashing doors, breaking jaws and cutting holes in roofs. In Denmark, burglars believed they could avoid detection by leaving behind their feces, scarcely a fair exchange for running off with your gold. The finger of a stillborn infant was also thought to be useful protection against arrest, and the wombs of pregnant women were occasionally cut open to extract their young. On the whole, the past was a nasty place to live in.

It is no wonder that this noxious medium known as night was announced by the ringing of bells, beating of drums and blowing of horns from watchtowers and ramparts. Townspeople hurried fearfully home before the gates of the city shut on them until dawn. The European towns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were gated communities, and all women apart from midwives risked public disgrace if they did not keep to their homes. As in the United States today, a great many households were armed. If you did venture abroad, the law required you to carry a light to allow your rank to be identified by your clothes. Nighttime offenses received heavier punishment than daytime ones, and in Tudor England burglary was one of the crimes for which you could not escape the death penalty by claiming to be literate. (These days, the more liberal sort of judge might award you a lighter sentence for claiming to be illiterate.) Linkboys with torches could be hired for a fee, but some of the less conscientious were likely to lead you straight to their thieving mates and then extinguish the light.

Towns employed a night watch, whose regular loudmouthed cries tended to keep awake the very citizens whose sleep they were supposed to be safeguarding. In fact, premodern men and women probably took a lot longer to fall asleep than we do: two hours, perhaps, in contrast to the modern average of ten to fifteen minutes. Beds were among the important domestic possessions, bequeathed in wills to favored heirs. Shakespeare bequeathed his second-best bed to his wife, but this may have been less

Terry Eagleton is professor of cultural theory and John Rylands Fellow at the University of Manchester, Britain. His next book, Holy Terror, *will be published by Oxford in the fall.*

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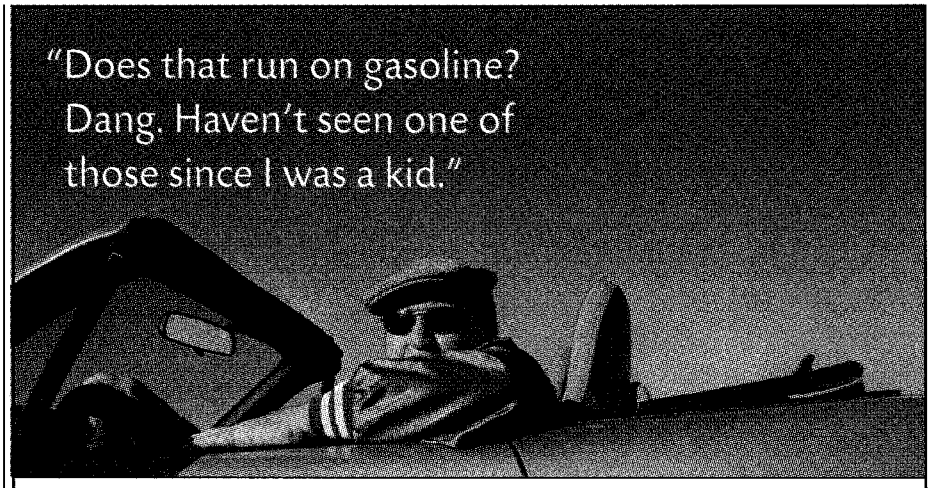
of a snub than we anachronistically imagine. Sleep was a precious commodity in a world where it was regularly interrupted by fear, cold, screams and vermin—so precious, in fact, that an eighteenth-century Connecticut woman shoveled a heap of hot embers into the gaping mouth of her snoring husband.

Yet night was not all fear and loathing. It was also a carnivalesque domain, where behind the mask of darkness you could achieve an autonomy denied to you in the day. And the licentiousness and disorder of night could be a kind of liberation. People regularly shared their beds with friends, relatives and servants for warmth and security, but also for less utilitarian reasons. Besides, if you took so long to fall asleep, you needed someone to talk to. In Tuscany, *la notte* was a euphemism for sodomy, while in England homosexuals assembled at night at so-called molly houses. "Nightwalker" meant prostitute, a trade plied by one-tenth of the population of Venice in the early sixteenth century.

There were other forms of license as well: In a society of punitive work disciplines, night could bring relief to the overtaxed laborer. The medieval guilds saw to it that many kinds of nocturnal work were illegal, which is more than can be said for modern trade unions. Even so, then as now, numerous men and women toiled far into the night. (The percentage of night workers in Britain today, for example, is astonishingly high.) Women, among the hardest workers, spent the night spinning, knitting and weaving, while so-called nightmen emptied the cesspools. The bodies of the dead were carted off at night during epidemics.

Yet if some preindustrial people worked through the night, others partied their way through it. Formalities fell by the wayside, to be replaced by sexual frolics for the lower classes and lavish entertainments for the patricians. Aristocratic young blades went berserk and wandered the streets in gangs with servants in tow, howling, brawling and attacking innocent pedestrians (Britain's Prince Harry was born after his time). Political subversives caballed by night and circulated incendiary broadsheets under cover of darkness. "In [eighteenth-century] Britain," Ekirch writes, "apprentices, hedge-breakers, Spitalfields weavers, and Jacobins all drew on a longstanding tradition of nocturnal revelry and resistance, as did vandals of turnpikes and dikes." So did the Whiteboys of what he rather quaintly calls "southern Ireland," though at the time



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Japanese Culture

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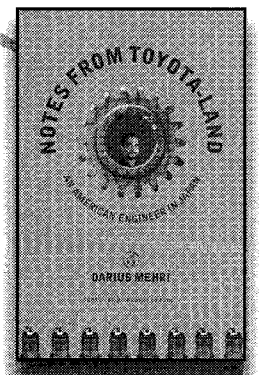

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Oyama Shiro
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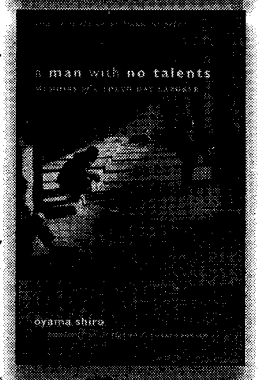

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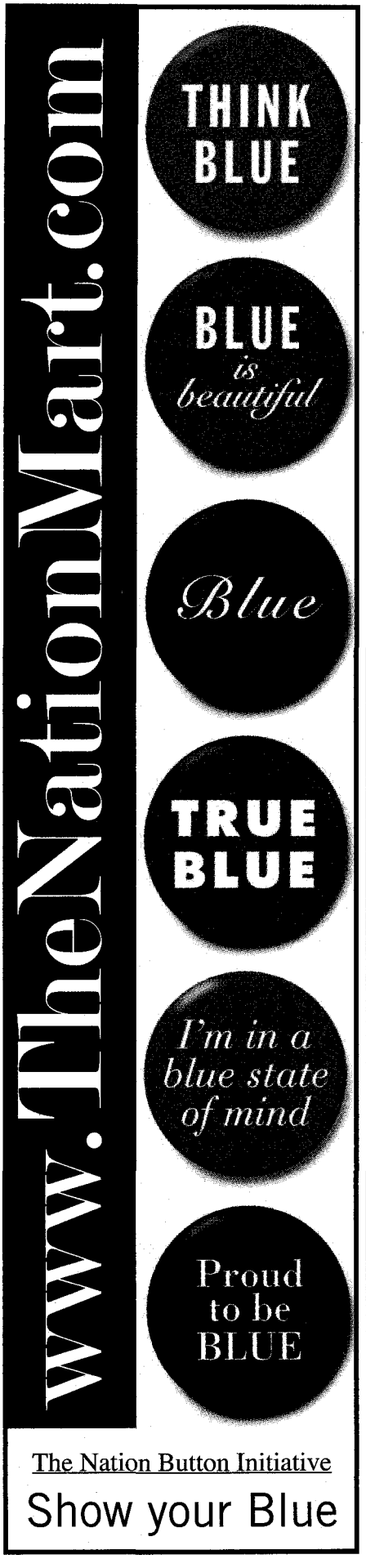

there was no such political entity.

This, however, is a rare lapse in a fascinating survey. Ekirch, a historian at Virginia Tech, has plundered an extraordinary range of cross-cultural sources for his material, and he tells us about everything from witches to firefighting, architecture to domestic violence. He must have lost a fair amount of sleep in writing this monumental study. In an unwonted outburst of Marxist analysis, we even learn about class distinction in candles between upper-class wax, middle-class tallow and lower-class rush light. The riffling of the card index, or its technological equivalent, can be heard rather too clearly throughout: The book is too much a tapestry of allusions, too little a reflective commentary. But *At Day's Close* has everything you need to know about what used to happen before the sun came up—or before the earth went down, as the modern theory has it. ■

FILMS

Eat the Document

STUART KLAWANS

THE UNTOLD STORY OF EMMETT LOUIS TILL • WINTER SOLDIER • A STATE OF MIND • GRIZZLY MAN

On a night in August fifty years ago, two white men in Money, Mississippi, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam, brought a pistol to the door of a black man named Mose Wright and demanded to search his beds for "the fat boy from Chicago." This was Wright's visiting grandnephew, 14-year-old Emmett Till, who a few days earlier had thought it funny to whistle at Bryant's wife. Now, to correct the boy's ignorance of Southern ways, Bryant and Milam yanked him from Wright's house, drove him to a deserted spot, beat and gouged and hacked and shot him and wrapped the corpse in barbed wire and dumped it into the Tallahatchie River.

We have long known these facts. The killers confessed them readily enough, for a fee, to *Look* magazine, soon after an all-white jury had acquitted them of murder—a verdict that was delayed only long enough for the jurors to enjoy a soda pop. But it has taken until now for us to hear from two others who were tucked into Wright's beds on that night in 1955: Till's cousins, who saw the abduction. It has taken until now to learn about possible accomplices and accessories to the murder, who are still alive and might be open to prosecution.

For this information, we can thank Keith Beauchamp, who in 1996 began to research the death of Emmett Till with the intention of making a documentary. By 2002 he was taking a rough cut to selected audiences and lobbying officials to reopen the case. The Justice Department did just that in May 2004, acting in part on evidence that Beauchamp had uncovered. For those who would like to see this evidence for themselves, and who have not been able to catch the documentary at its handful of special screenings, Beauchamp's *The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till* is now going into theatrical release with a run at New York's Film Forum, starting August 17.

Of the important documentaries being released this month, *Till* registers farthest to the left on the raw-to-cooked scale. You watch it for what it tells, not how it does the telling; for what it might accomplish in the world, not for what it is. That's plenty, when you consider the vast impact that Till's lynching had in its time. When you consider that its time is still now—that many of the principals are alive, and that Till today would be all of 64—the significance of Beauchamp's achievement speaks for itself.

And yet it seems to me that *The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till* is two movies—one an investigative report, the other a portrait—and that the second of them might have been more fully developed. This latter picture could have told us much more about Till's mother, Mamie Till-Mobley, who cooperated with Beauchamp until her death in 2003 and who emerges as the most compelling figure of his documentary, or perhaps of all this year's releases combined.

Gray-haired and plump, she sits on her living-room sofa and patiently inventories the horrors she saw when she insisted that the undertaker open her son's coffin.

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Her voice neither trembles nor fades as she details the wounds; she speaks with the care and clarity of an old-style high school English teacher. Once or twice, perhaps, she looks away from the camera; but then she recovers, as she explains how she instructed the undertaker to leave the coffin open for the funeral. Although a photograph proves that at one point her legs gave out, archival footage shows that she also was able to stand firm, speaking in the same calm tone that she would later use with Beauchamp. At a distance of fifty years, you still hear the resolve she brought to the task she imposed on herself: to make a Mississippi sheriff give up her son's corpse; to force herself to study the body; and then to put the mangled, rotting thing on view, so that her private grief might be changed into a public purpose.

Where on earth did Mamie Till-Mobley come from? How did she become so strong? What did she do with that strength in the many years after Till's death? I wish Beauchamp had provided some answers. *The Untold Story of Emmett Louis Till* demands your attention for its research into an infamous and highly consequential crime; but the great mystery it calls up is not the murder of the boy but the character of his mother.

Better cooked than Beauchamp's film—more thoughtfully put together, but still a document more than a documentary—is the indispensable and historic *Winter Soldier*, which is being re-released after going virtually unseen for many years. Shot and edited on a patched-up budget by the Winterfilm Collective, a volunteer group of eighteen independent, New York–based filmmakers, this 1972 feature is the only audiovisual record of the Winter Soldier Investigation: three days of eyewitness and confessional testimony about US atrocities in Vietnam, organized in early 1971 by Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

You will recall that during the 2004 electoral campaign, John Kerry's enemies made much of his participation in this event, which they described as fraudulent. Although Kerry, when questioned, replied quietly that the veterans' accounts had proved to be true, it was easy enough for his opponents to make the lie stick. Many writers and camera crews had attended the conference, held in Detroit at a Howard Johnson's motel; but the major news organizations chose not to report the evidence that was presented, nor did any national broadcaster subsequently agree to show *Winter Soldier*. Apart from a brief

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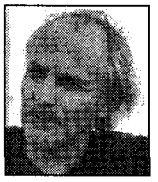
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flurry of screenings in Manhattan, at Cinema 2 and the Whitney Museum, and an airing on New York's PBS affiliate, *Winter Soldier* and its testimony were effectively buried.

I don't imagine the picture would have changed the outcome of the election, had it re-emerged a year ago instead of now. But I believe most people know the face of truth when they see it, and that good filmmakers can show that face—so it's too bad that voters in 2004 didn't have a chance to see Rusty Sachs, Scott Camil, Kenneth Campbell and all the others, including (very briefly, in a backup role) John Kerry. It's not just that people would have recognized through them the awful, unchallengeable reality of crimes committed against innumerable civilians—committed as standard operating procedure, as the witnesses emphasized, and recalled here in sometimes sickening detail. Just as important, Americans would have heard the grief in the veterans' voices and seen their tears, which these men for so long had thought must not be shed.

Winter Soldier is the first release of Milliarium Zero, a company honorably established by Milestone Films to distribute works of "strong political and social content." In New York, the picture may be seen at the Walter Reade Theater at Lincoln Center, where it is part of a weeklong tribute to Milestone Films, August 12–18.

With Daniel Gordon's made-for-BBC documentary *A State of Mind*, we get to something fully cooked, with fine cinematography, smooth editing, a comprehensive script and an authoritative-sounding voiceover. Not that you'll notice. Gordon's subject matter is so astonishing that you will simply stare in appalled fascination at the picture, another Film Forum premiere, which opens August 10 (and runs for one week only—hurry!).

The first foreign journalist granted permission to make a film in North Korea, Gordon chose to document preparations for the autumn 2003 Mass Games in the capital of Pyongyang. The word "games" is misleading, since these events (which began in 1946) are actually patriotic pageants featuring live music, enormous, ever-changing pictorial backdrops and elaborate gymnastic displays. The word "mass," though, is fully appropriate. As many as 100,000 people perform in the shows, which demand months of rigorous group practice. Beyond those 100,000 are the citizens who work up routines without being selected, or who train the performers, organize the events and help manage the audiences—which means that a large percentage of Pyongyang's 2 million residents devote themselves to mounting these spectacles. Although some 4 million people may see a Mass Game during its run, the show is always presented for the satisfaction of just one viewer—the "Dear General," Kim Jong Il—who may or may not honor the performers with his presence.

To reveal the effect of the Mass Games on daily life, Gordon spent several months filming two of the gymnasts: 13-year-old Pak Hyon Sun and 11-year-old Kim Song Yun. The girls, who are close friends, could scarcely contain their excitement at the possibility of being seen by the Dear General, or their fear that they might falter and disappoint him. Despite injuries and short rations (though not as short as those

EVENTS

NATIONAL

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■ Saturday, August 20, to Tuesday, August 23, Camp Chinqueka, Bantam, Connecticut. Plenaries include: "Policy Alternatives," with Susan Williams McElroy, Robert Pollin and Gil Skillman; "Restructuring Social Relations," with Julie Matthaei, John Miller and Héctor Sáez; "Alternatives to Capitalism," with Gar Alperovitz, Allin Cottrell and Robin Hahnel; and the David Gordon Lecture ("Seven Theses for a Robust 21st-Century Socialism"), by David Laibman. Special guest workshops by the Association for Economic and Social Analysis. And lots of other workshops! Camp Chinqueka, located in the mountains of northwestern Connecticut, provides opportunities for swimming, boating, tennis, basketball, soccer and hiking. Children are welcome. Rates: sliding scale. For more information, contact URPE at urpe@labornet.org or (413) 577-0806. Visit our website: www.urpe.org.

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CALIFORNIA

MET Theatre Screenings

■ What really happened on September 11? Hollywood's MET Theatre presents *9/11 Mysteries: Legend or Logic?* How *did* those buildings come down so fast? A multimedia eye-opening show! See major media's "woops" footage—never aired again. Sundays (August 7, 14, 21), 2–5 PM. Tickets: $20 (with $5 discount at door). Admission includes free copy of DVD *Loose Change*. The MET Theatre, 1089 North Oxford, Hollywood, CA 90029. (323) 957-1152; www.911Mysteries.com.

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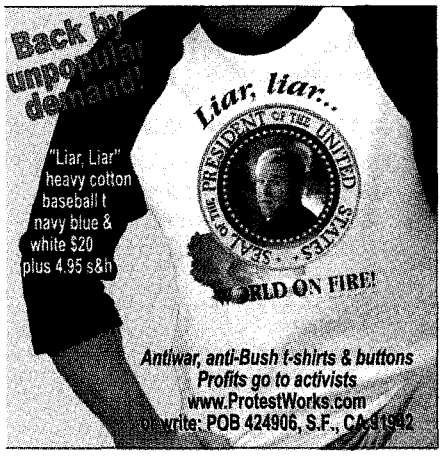
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endured by other North Koreans), they practiced up to ten hours a day, perfecting the sort of exhausting, synchronized group routine that is the essence of the Mass Games. Think of it as a desexualized Busby Berkeley number, in which rows and rows of girls in unison give up their rapt smiles, their outflung limbs, their thrusting buttocks for the glory of thrice-great Kim: "great in ideology, great in leadership and great in aura."

And we think we have something called "the society of the spectacle"? We don't know what the term means.

And now, to conclude, a documentary that is a fully realized work of art: *Grizzly Man*, by Werner Herzog.

The film's subject, not surprisingly, is Herzog himself, as mirrored in the life and death of a self-invented environmentalist named Timothy Treadwell (1957–2003). For thirteen summers, Treadwell went into the Alaskan wilderness to live among grizzly bears: learning their habits, following their life cycles and (as far as possible) blending in with them. During the off-seasons, he gave free talks about the bears to schoolchildren, managed his own preservation foundation, co-wrote a book about grizzlies and appeared on television talk shows. During his last five summers in Alaska, until the day a bear killed him and a companion, Amie Huguenard, he also videotaped his experiences. The footage he left behind—a hundred hours' worth, much of it extraordinary—provides the core material for *Grizzly Man* and permits Herzog to speak of Treadwell as a fellow filmmaker.

He was an actor, too. For the most part, he appears in his videotapes as a lean and bubbly fellow with a blond Prince Valiant haircut and a Mr. Rogers manner of speech. He gives cute names to animals and tells them "I love you." But as Herzog pieces together Treadwell's biography, mostly through newly shot interviews, a more driven side of the man emerges. We learn of a history of professional failure, drinking, drug abuse, mythomania and (so far as I can see) deeply conflicted sexuality. By discovering a passion for grizzly bears, Treadwell saved his life—he said so himself. Ultimately, though, he also gave up his life, and Huguenard's, to a fantasy of nature's benevolence.

In Treadwell's tapes, we see an attempt to make a film about wilderness and wildlife. In Herzog's hands, that same footage becomes a dark, complex film about human nature—or, at least, about the nature of two particular humans. ■

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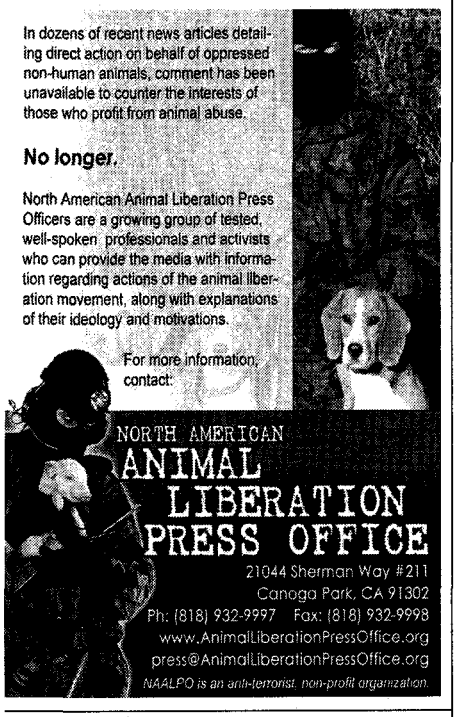
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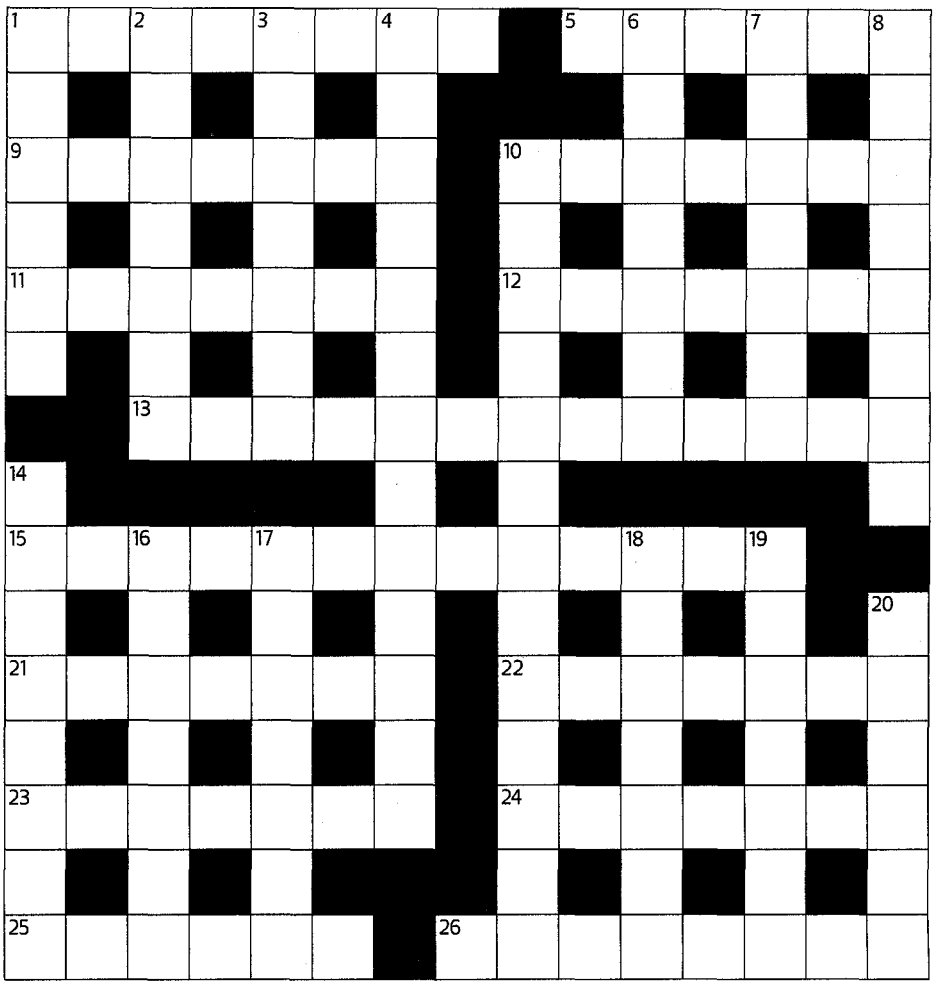

ACROSS

1 The wrong gear, sent the wrong way, bring substances that might cause a counteraction. (8)

5 Money you and I brought back to find more than one such could be really nuts! (6)

9 Must, in a peculiar way, make waves—big ones! (7)

10 Not exactly a *thé dansant*, but it might provide a drink or so! (3-4)

11 Hats off to this, at times. (A hag felt awful with it!) (3,4)

12 When someone is late, do they deserve such nice words? (7)

13 The Knight of Bath, as one hears, according to tradition. (8,5)

15 People who want to stay out, when I thus find nothing in Latin sits badly with it. (13)

21 In Pennsylvania, you'll do it according to the book. (7)

22 More like some perennials, it's difficult, that is, to get right! (7)

23 Either major or minor in the sky, possibly altered to be earth. (3,4)

24 What some lousy people have to do just to find fault. (3-4)

25 When not out-of-doors, they say it's bad judgment to draw to this straight type. (6)

26 You won't see many joints with such things. (8)

DOWN

1 To bring it up in the way some judge things, put a spin on something. (6)

2 A beast of burden on Eliot might get worn out in society, if you're lucky… (7)

3 …and believe in rank distinction like this. (It's an item, of course, coming up around Peter and Mary's companion!) (7)

4 A pointer, otherwise, with Mr. Rogers's horse to blame. (7,6)

6 A halt, in the end— marking a decisive British victory. (7)

7 You might see it above the article going in a certain direction. (7)

8 and **20** They are not officially called "puma hits"—or "animals on wheels." (4-3,7)

10 An opportunity offering the greatest gain, such as a seagoing gamble. (3,4,6)

14 They should tell you what the opera star is really saying, with Mr. Harte south of Long Island with an IT crisis! (8)

16 Beasts are the only kinds found around silver. (7)

17 Look! And I get a sort of it around an important oil producer. (7)

18 A single layer sort of pie rises in total to make it. (7)

19 In *The Mikado*, an echo arose from one's grave. (Here in France it gets used environmentally but wrongly.) (7)

20 See 8

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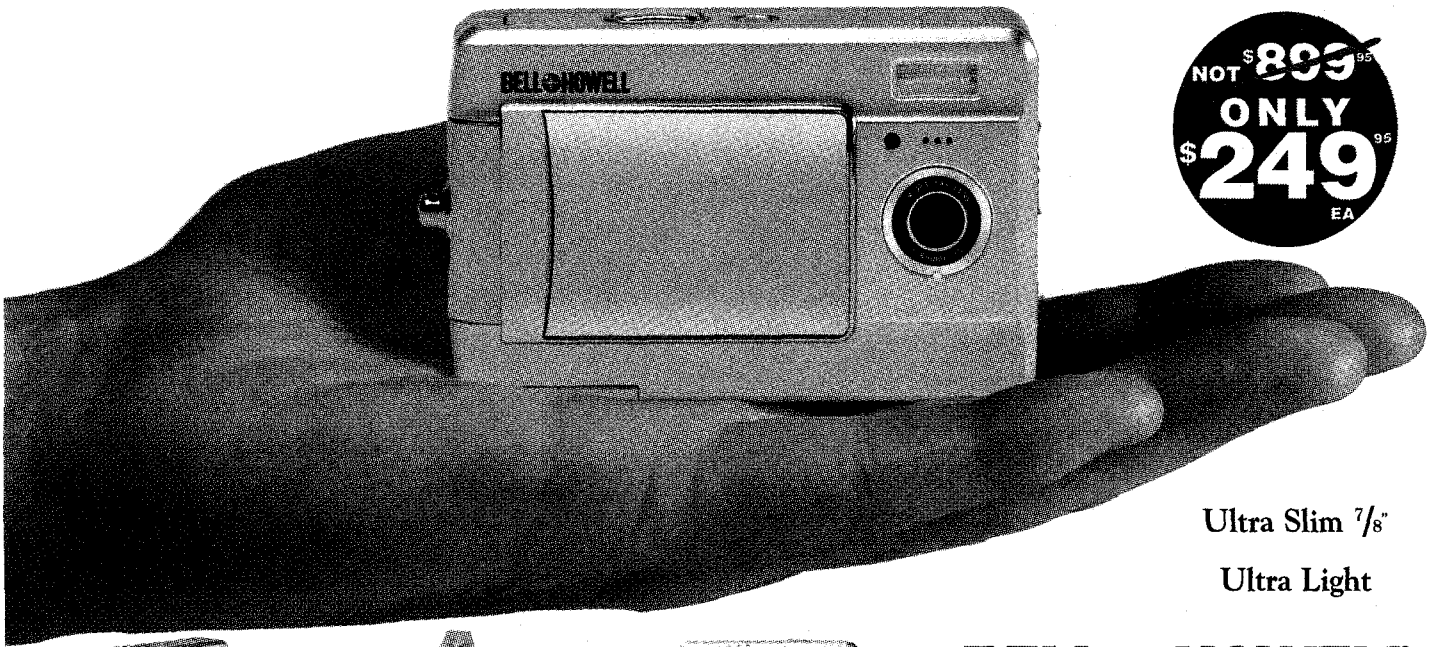

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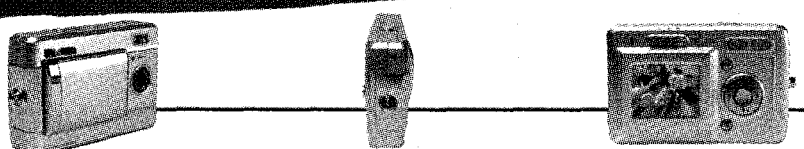

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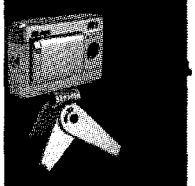

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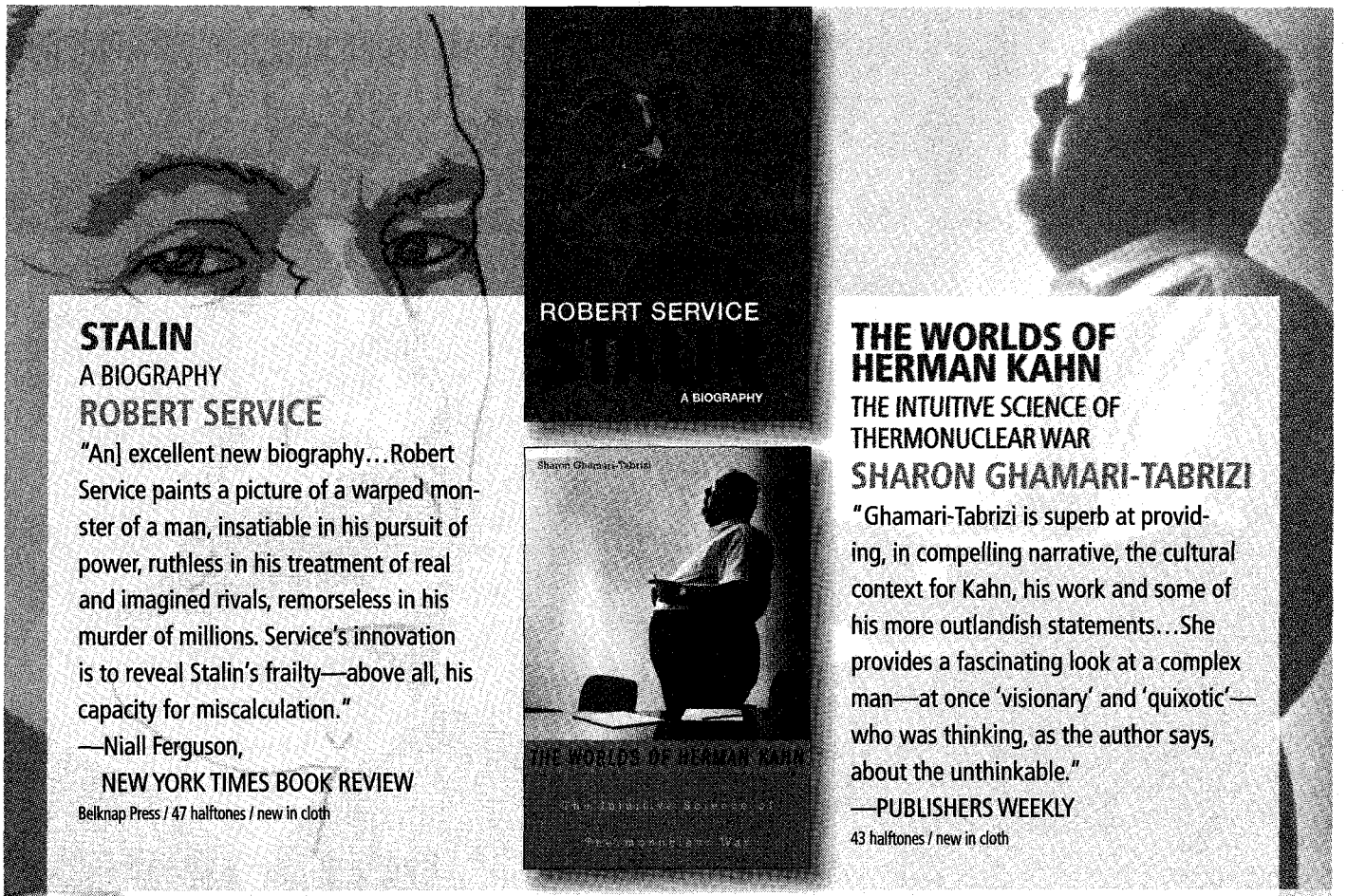

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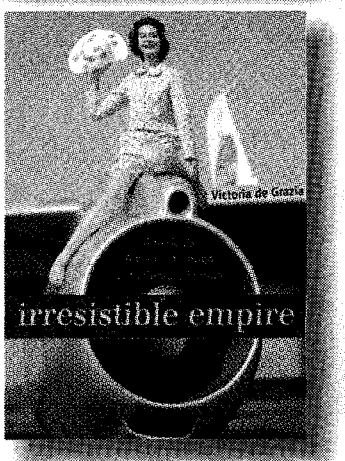

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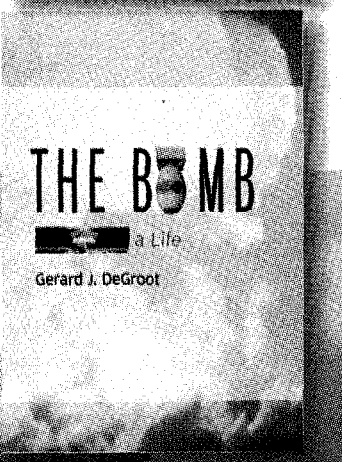

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